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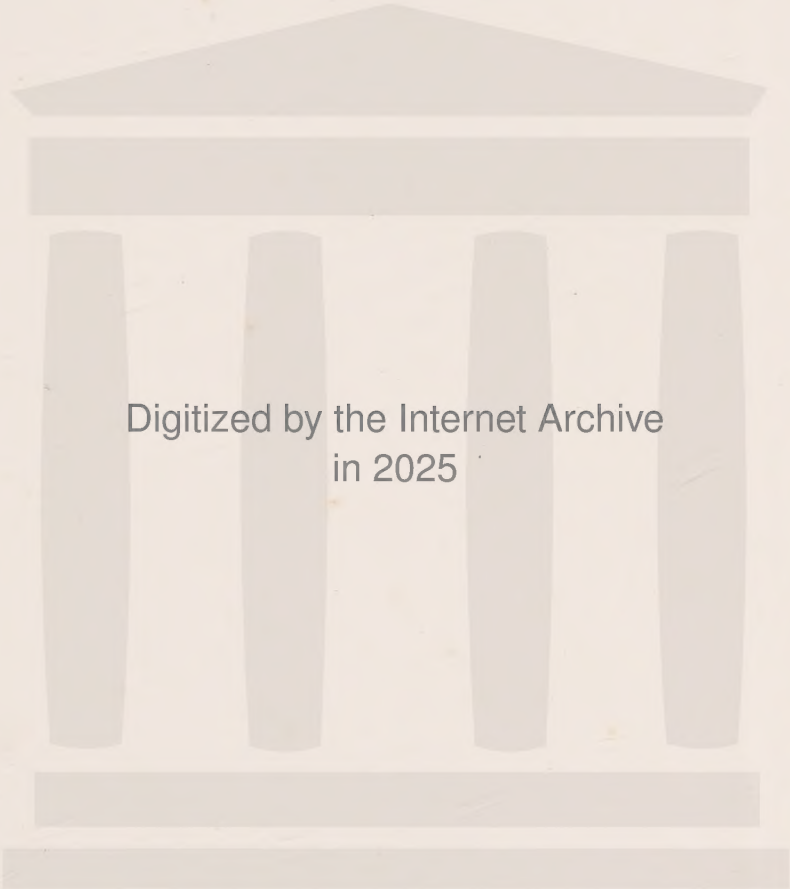

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Detail from the Singing Gallery.

In the Cathedral Museum Florence. *Luca della Robbia*

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STORIES

OF THE

TUSCAN ARTISTS

BY

ALBINIA WHERRY

AUTHOR OF
"GREEK SCULPTURE IN STORY AND SONG"

WITH FIFTY-THREE ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM THEIR WORKS
IN PHOTOGRAVURE AND HALF-TONES

1901

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TO BEATRIX

Sweet, who since thy grey eyes first looked upon the sun
That fair June morning fourteen years ago,
Hast been like Dante's Beatrix, "Giver of all good"

A golden sunbeam dancing through the gloom,
When clouds hang low and days drag heavily,
Keep thou thy brightness though the shadows fall.

To thee, and many maids on either side the sea
My work is given.—Be always fair and good
Like one, who was the poet's guiding star.

June 5, 1901.

PREFACE

THE history of the Revival of Art in Italy in the Middle Ages is large and complicated, and has been discussed by many critics, from many points of view, in innumerable books instructive and otherwise.

The object of the illustrated volume now before you is to awaken interest in those who do not know the originals of these carefully chosen examples, not only in the pictures themselves, but in the story of the artists who painted them.

It is hoped that such a book will be welcomed by many young people and educated parents, and sympathetic teachers of the older children may find the descriptive chapters very helpful in developing that latent taste, which so many children possess, into an enthusiastic interest in both painting and poetry.

Nearly every one, young and old, loves stories,

and the story or legend, though discredited by the modern historian, may often serve as a peg on which to hang a definite piece of knowledge. Had we not learned in childhood that King Alfred burned the cakes, we might not have remembered that he conquered the Danes and founded the English Navy. The interest first aroused by the subject of a picture will presently extend to its history, and then, when the original is within reach, to its colour and technique. Some of my readers will hereafter visit Italy, tread the narrow streets and climb the steep hillsides with which in imagination they are already familiar. Those who turn the pages of this book may build up for themselves a world of fancy, and dwelling in spirit with these old artists, forget for a time all the sordid ugliness of life in the cultivation of pleasant thoughts and the infinite possibilities to be found in Art.

The contents of this volume are derived from many different sources and often quoted from memory, hence it is impossible to acknowledge separately every debt, but a special word of thanks is due to the memory of Mrs. Jameson, who nearly

half a century ago gave to the world those useful volumes, "The Legends of the Madonna," "The Saints and the Monastic Orders."

My most grateful thanks are also due to Messrs. Alinari and Brogi of Florence for their courteous permission to reproduce their admirable photographs, and also to those friends whose advice and practical assistance has been so kindly and so ably given.

ALBINIA WHERRY.

Corpus Buildings,
Cambridge, 1901.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the course of these pages we shall more than once have occasion to speak of the Florentine painters as artists of the Renaissance. What does this mean? The Renaissance in Italy was in a great measure the reawakening in men's minds of a love of beauty, of a desire for knowledge.

No page of history is more brilliant than that which tells of the Golden Age of Greece, when the Greeks, having conquered and driven back the invading armies of the Great King, rebuilt beautiful Athens, "the city of the violet crown." Beneath the marble porticoes of the magnificent temples, which now rose rapidly under the direction of the most skilful architects, orators, statesmen, and philosophers met daily to discuss the greatest problems of the universe. In the large open-air theatre thousands of spectators assembled to hear wonderful dramas by the greatest of play-writers. Sculptors made images of the gods in the likeness of beautiful men and women, and painters decorated the interiors of the assembly rooms with scenes from legendary

history. When Rome conquered Greece, the Roman generals carried away as trophies the accumulated treasures of the Greek temples, and Greek artists and philosophers made the imperial city their home.

In the year Anno Domini, from which Christians reckon time, a child was born in an obscure village of Judea, whose teaching, when a grown man, revolutionised the world. The Greek Epicurean philosopher said: "Life is short, let us enjoy it to the utmost." The Stoic said: "Life is full of sorrow and pain, steel yourself to bear it patiently; but love nothing, for what you love best will be taken from you." The followers of Christ said: "Life is indeed short, but after death comes life everlasting; rejoice in suffering, because your Master also suffered to redeem mankind." The Greeks prided themselves on their beauty, the Romans on their strength; the Christians, who defaced their bodies by fasting and scourging, and went down naked and unarmed into the circus to be devoured by wild beasts, cared neither for beauty nor strength.

In Christian art, therefore, perfection of face and form, beauty in composition or colour, counted for nothing. It was regarded as an invention of the devil, who lies in wait always to entrap man through his senses. The story to be told, the moral teaching to be conveyed, that was the thing of real importance. This change was a gradual one, for until after the third century Christian artists continued to use pagan models, which they adapted

to their own use. Thus Christ as a judge appears in the guise of Zeus, "who, when he shook his ambrosial locks, made the earth to tremble." As the shepherd of men he was Hermes Criophorus, who carries a ram on his shoulder; or Orpheus, whose sweet music tamed the savage beasts. In the reign of the Emperor Diocletian came a time of terrible persecution, when the Christians, subjected to horrible tortures, were driven to worship in the catacombs, the underground caves and burial-places beneath Rome. Then came war, followed by famine, famine by pestilence, hordes of barbarians devastated the fair plains of Italy, the great Roman Empire was dismembered, and the imperial city sacked by savage invaders. No wonder their art became poor, and the subjects they painted were often painful ones—crucifixions, *pietàs* (the name given to the representation of the dead Christ in the arms of His mother), and martyrdoms of the saints.

It was foretold in the Revelation that after such a time of woe and disaster the end of the world would come, and this was expected to take place one thousand years after Christ. All men desire that their deeds should live after them, and few people cared to do good work that must so soon perish. Art never died out altogether, for at the time that it had reached its lowest ebb in the West, it continued to flourish in the eastern half of the old Roman Empire. The mosaics and paintings from Byzantium (Constantinople), the elaborately decorated churches in Armenia, which belong to

the ninth and tenth centuries, abundantly prove this statement, and the accounts handed down of the golden days of Haroun al Raschid, who was a contemporary of Charlemagne, give a picture of the learning and culture which then flourished among the Saracens.

The year 999 arrived, 1000, 1001, and yet the sun rose daily, the seasons pursued their even course, and the world took heart again. One of the first signs of renewed life was an extraordinary religious fervour, which seized upon all classes, and impelled kings and beggars, knights, monks, noble ladies, and even children, to journey to Jerusalem, in the hope of delivering the Holy Sepulchre from the Saracens. Few of these ever reached their goal, fewer still returned to their homes. This religious fervour found another, and a more practical, outlet in the erection of magnificent cathedrals, which at the close of the eleventh century began to spring up everywhere.

The Tuscan Romanesque style of the first Italian cathedrals was directly derived from Roman classical architecture, but the twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw the development of that Gothic style to which belongs many of the finest cathedrals in France, Germany, and England, and in the modified form known as Tuscan Gothic to Italy. The name "Gothic" is misleading, for this style of architecture, with its heaven-aspiring lines so especially suited to ecclesiastical buildings, had nothing whatever to do with the barbarous invaders from the North, but was a term of reproach applied

by the admirers of classical architecture in the sixteenth century to a style of building which they despised.

The introduction of this new architecture had a stimulating effect on the sister arts by giving employment both to painters and sculptors. That sculpture had not died out altogether is evident from the unbroken continuity of carved ivories; for these small objects, often concealed in ancient presses in out-of-the-way convents, escaped the general destruction. Painting also survived in the form of mosaic and in illuminated manuscripts.

The torch burning dimly, but never entirely extinguished, was thus handed on. The workers in mosaic were the teachers of the first artists of the new schools of painting. The most authentic work of Cimabue, the master of Giotto, is the great mosaic in the cathedral at Pisa. This cathedral, built in the eleventh century, was the first great church of the Tuscan Romanesque school, and its ancient bronze doors are the immediate precursors of the famous bronze doors of the Baptistery at Florence. So closely are the links thus drawn.

Foremost among the many causes which influenced mediæval art was the honour paid to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Long before the Christian era mother and child had been adored under different names, but never to the same degree. Madonna worship, which first became a doctrine of the Church after the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D., at once took hold of the public mind,

and Mary became the goddess of the sacred hearth, which was now no longer that of the temple, but of the home.

The romantic reverence paid to women in the days of chivalry not only increased this devotion, but introduced a personal element. "For God and our Ladye," shouted the Christian knight, as he hewed down the paynim invader. "Ave Maria," murmured the sailor, as he knelt before the rude daub nailed to the mast, and noble knight and simple seaman were animated by the same idea.

It was not only the far-away Queen of Heaven to whom their desires turned, and for whom love and tenderness welled up in those stern hearts, but it was the noble maiden waiting sadly in her bower, the wife and child in the far distant cottage home, who were present in their thoughts, and of whom Mary the virgin and Mary the mother was the symbol. Mary thus became the recognised type of the ideal woman, and painters and sculptors vied with each other in the attempt to represent her perfections. As few other subjects were permitted to them, it is not surprising that when occasionally they attempted an unclothed figure they were for some time unsuccessful, and often hideous and grotesque. The model for an emaciated hermit was indeed easily to be found, but not so a beautiful, youthful form. The unwholesome town life, the cumbrous clothes, were destructive to the even development of limbs and muscles, so that ill-proportioned bodies, large heads, and weak inturned

knees characterised figures intended for those of athletes. The sculptors found an outlet for their special talent in the recumbent figures on the tombs, and in the portrait busts, where character, more than beauty, is essential. It was the influence of sculpture which saved Florentine painting from falling into the same conventional style as that of Siena. The painters, so long restricted to religious subjects, introduced into their scenes the likenesses of their friends and patrons in every-day attire. Through the window of the Madonna's chamber, or beneath her elevated throne, appeared glimpses of landscapes, and these gradually increased in size and importance, and became less conventional. For the Renaissance of portrait and landscape painting had now taken place. We know that both these arts had been practised by the Greeks, for there still exist painted coffins with portraits of their owners found in the cemetery of a Greek colony in Egypt. The wall paintings of the buried city of Pompeii, with their spirited landscapes, have long been celebrated, and many old manuscripts still show how this branch of painting fell into decay, crushed out by the conventionality of the Byzantine and native Italian forms. The painters of the Italian Renaissance breathed into these a new life, and so developed them on new lines, that from this time an unbroken tradition has descended with ever-increasing possibilities to those modern artists who, like their predecessors of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, still nobly strive after perfection.

In tracing, however slightly, the history of the revival of art in the Middle Ages, we cannot omit some reference to the intellectual activity and revival of learning which was contemporary with it. In France, as early as the eleventh century, the scholar Abelard had stood forth as the champion of realism against the mystical fervour of Bernard of Clairvaux, who preached the second crusade. In the twelfth century came a great outburst of epic and lyric poetry throughout civilised Europe, and a fresh wave of religious fervour associated with the preaching of St. Francis and St. Dominic. In the thirteenth century the most prominent figure in literature is the poet Dante, the contemporary and friend of Giotto. The change, which had long been working beneath the surface, now becomes clearly perceptible in every phase of human art and intellect. We shall see in the course of these pages how Niccolo Pisano, who was at the height of his artistic activity in 1265, the year of Dante's birth, was influenced by the study of classical remains, and also in some unexplained way by the French Gothic sculptors. Dante and his immediate successors, Petrarch and Boccaccio, were all enthusiastic students of the classics, and the new interest awakened in men's minds by the discovery of buried antiquities was stimulated by the now widely-spread knowledge of Latin and even Greek literature. It was, however, not until the middle of the fourteenth century that the revival of the spirit of classic art reached its climax, in the impulse which was given to it by the fall of Constantinople, taken by the Turks in

1453. The ancient capital of the Eastern empire, though shorn of temporal power, had always been a centre of culture. The homeless scholars now fled westward, carrying with them their precious Greek manuscripts. Everywhere in Italy they were welcomed with enthusiasm, for even the most blood-thirsty tyrants took an interest in the new learning and were liberal patrons of the arts. Though the courts of Naples, Ferrara, Urbino, and Milan all united in their welcome, it was above all in Florence, in the luxurious court of the Medici, that a galaxy of bright stars gathered round Lorenzo de' Medici and his brothers. So rapid was the development of the seed thus planted in congenial soil, so numerous were the artists, each of whom contributed something to the general sum of artistic achievement, that it will be necessary in the course of these pages to confine ourselves to the consideration of a few representative men, beginning with the sculptors of the school of Pisa and concluding with Sandro Botticelli, the most representative artist of the classical revival. The other artists here described were influenced by its outward form, he alone by its inward significance, and in him are united the two conflicting elements of mediæval mysticism and classic learning. His religious pictures are as devotional as those of Fra Angelico; his classical ones, though they have none of the joy of early pagan art, fitly represent the pagan revival, altered as it was by the different view now held, not of this life only, but of the life to come.

The great Masters, Leonardo da Vinci,

Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Andrea del Sarto, have not been included in these pages, for they belong rather to the sixteenth than the fifteenth century. Their familiar names have long overshadowed those of their predecessors, but they entered into an inheritance won for them by the patient toil, the untiring energy, of many artists of minor fame. Without Jacopo della Quercia there might have been no Michael Angelo, and among the works hitherto attributed to Raphael some at least are by the hands of other Umbrian artists. Leonardo, though educated in Florence, is especially associated with the school of Milan. Michael Angelo's greatest paintings are in Rome. Andrea del Sarto attained to the perfection of technique with entire absence of soul. His beautiful wife, sordid, faithless, discontented, is his ideal of the Madonna. The same soulless perfection appears in the later works of Raphael, and he who attained to the greatest heights also sounded the first note in the descending scale.

For our knowledge of the life and work of these Florentine artists we owe much to a certain Giorgio Vasari, who lived at the end of the sixteenth century. He was himself a painter, and though most industrious, an exceedingly bad one, but his writings are delightful. In his pages the men he describes cease to be mere names, but become living persons; you hear what they wore, what they ate, and who were their friends, the names of their wives, the number of their children. With regard to their work, also, many pictures have been

Alinari, Florence

THE ANNUNCIATION AND THE NATIVITY

Panel from the Pulpit in the Baptistery at Pisa

Niccolo Pisano

recognised from the description given by Vasari, that are now far away from their first home. Still, while acknowledging without stint our debt to this most entertaining writer, and advising you by all means to read him for yourselves, it is necessary to give a word of warning. In the first place many pictures which he describes have perished, others are no longer where he saw them, and in those days of difficult travel and few written records he had frequently to rely on inaccurate accounts given by other people which he could not verify for himself. Vasari, moreover, was swayed by prejudice; if for some reason he did not like a person, no story was bad enough to be believed, while, on the other hand, a most inferior painter might be elevated to importance if he happened to be in any way connected with him. Some most excellent artists are passed over almost in silence: of some evil stories have been related, which have now been proved to be altogether untrue.

CHAPTER II

THE REVIVAL OF SCULPTURE

NICCOLO AND GIOVANNI PISANO

(1200–1320)

We have learnt from the introduction that art had reached a very low ebb in Western Europe at the period of the first millennium, but that at the close of the eleventh century a general revival took place. The revival of sculpture in France preceded that of Italy, and began in Italy some time before painting.

If time and space had allowed, it would have been interesting to have shown you some of the extraordinary stone carving made by artists in the centuries preceding the time with which we are now concerned. These carvings were the work of the Comacene sculptors, who derived their name from their home on an island of Lake Como in northern Italy.

Probably the first Comacene artists were the remnant of the Roman sculptors who had taken refuge there when Italy was overrun by barbarian invaders. Artist guilds had existed from very remote times, and in the sixth and seventh centuries these Comacene artists were protected and encouraged by

the Lombard kings. Later on they found employment not only in Italy, but in France, Germany, England, and Ireland. Hexham Abbey in Yorkshire, and St. Bartholomew, Smithfield, in London, both show Comacene work. The churches built by them have round arches, and wonderful carved stonework on the capitals, or heads of the pillars, round the doors and windows, and in every possible position. Here all sorts of fabulous animals, demons, dragons, chimeras, griffins, hippogriffs, besides monstrous human forms, writhe in endless confusion among wreaths of heavy foliage. Some years ago, if you had asked why such barbarian decoration was employed for Christian churches, you would have been told that it was the outcome of the struggle between paganism and Christianity still going on in the minds of half-civilised architects and craftsmen, who, though they outwardly adopted the Christian faith, yearned after the demon worship of their heathen forefathers. This is not the true explanation; on the contrary, these weird creations are not the chance results of the unbridled imagination of the artist, they are Christian emblems derived in most cases from Bible history.

Among the most frequently-used symbols of these artists are two which you will easily learn to recognise. One is an endless braid, without beginning and without end, formed to an immense variety of patterns which look like basket-work. It is called Solomon's knot. The other is the lion of Judah, which, placed at first above, afterwards beneath, the pillars, has a mystical reference

to Christ, the Head of the Church, whose root was in the tribe of Judah from which He claimed descent. The first sculptors of the new school continued to use the lion beneath the pillar, but another meaning was now attached to it whose origin is an ancient Eastern fable related by Pliny and Aristotle. When a lion cub is born dead, his father after three days by licking restores life to him. Hence the lion is a symbol of the resurrection of the dead. The churches of Lucca, Pistoja, and Arezzo, all near Florence, abound with grotesque carving made by artists of the Comacene school who lived close up to the time of the revival. These carved slabs and pulpits are crowded with small figures whose eyes, inlaid with black marble, have a most singular effect. One pulpit, that of S. Bartolommeo at Pistoja, is especially remarkable, for while two of the pillars rest on the backs of lions, the central one is supported by a crouching human figure, said to be a portrait of the artist Guido da Como.

Before, however, we begin to talk about the work of the Pisan sculptors, let us transport ourselves in imagination to the once flourishing seaport—

> "— the proud mart of Pisæ,
> Queen of the western waves,
> Where ride Massilia's triremes
> Heavy with fair-haired slaves."
> —Macaulay, *Lays of Ancient Rome.*

Proud Pisa is now a discrowned queen, her harbour is blocked by sand, and the grass grows in her once populous streets and market-places; but

at the time of which we are speaking Pisa was still prosperous, and proud of possessing the cathedral, baptistery, leaning tower, and burial-ground which still remain to tell of her former glory.

The famous burial-ground called the Campo Santo (holy field) was laid out after the traditional measurements of Noah's Ark ; the enclosed space is filled with earth brought from Palestine by Pisan merchant ships, and in the foreign soil blooms a red anemone unknown elsewhere in Italy. Beneath the shadow of the beautiful cloister, adorned with faded frescoes by celebrated artists from Florence and Siena, stand still more ancient coffins belonging to pagan days of old.

About the year 1206 was born a certain Nicholas, called from his birthplace Niccolo Pisano. He very early distinguished himself as an architect, and he was not more than fifteen years old when Frederick II., Emperor of Germany and the two Sicilies, took him away to Naples, where he was occupied for ten years in rebuilding castles and planning fortifications. Ten years later he was employed at Padua in designing a great church built in honour of St. Anthony, a disciple of St. Francis. From Padua he went to Florence, where the citizens were fighting desperately among themselves. The Ghibellines, or anti-church party, being now in power, proceeded to wreak their vengeance not only on the persons, but also on the buildings of their enemies the Guelphs. Having thrown down their towers and palaces, they determined if possible to destroy the beautiful old Baptistery of San

Giovanni, dear to the hearts of all Florentines as the place where every new-born citizen was received into the Church. As they dared not do this openly, they employed Niccolo to undermine the foundation of a tower called the *Guardamorte*, where, according to an ancient custom, were deposited before burial the bodies of the dead. This tower in falling would, they thought, crush in the roof of the Baptistery.

Niccolo accomplished the destruction of the tower in an ingenious manner, first removing the stone foundations on one side, and replacing them with wooden supports which were afterwards set on fire; when, "by the grace of God and a special miracle of St. John," says the historian, and I think we may add, by the wise contrivance of the architect, the *Guardamorte* fell across the cathedral square and did no harm. Thus were defeated the schemes of these evil and unpatriotic citizens.

Niccolo therefore must have been a middle-aged man before he began to sculpture the pulpits of Pisa and Siena, to which he owes his fame; and it is still an open question where he acquired that knowledge of the due proportions of the human frame, and that feeling for beauty, which distinguished him from those sculptors who came before him. Until lately, most people accepted without question the account given by Vasari, that his sole teaching was derived from the study of the sculptured Græco-Roman coffins in the Campo Santo, especially that of Beatrice, mother of Matilda, the famous Countess of Tuscany. On this coffin

was the legend of Hippolytus, son of Theseus, who was killed by a fall from his chariot. Such a subject was a popular one for a sepulchral monument, especially if the original tenant had been a noble youth cut off in the flower of his age, but it was the custom in the Middle Ages to bury in them important persons without reference to age or sex. It seems probable, however, that Niccolo in his wanderings with Frederick was also influenced by the good Roman work which abounded in southern Italy, and may have come in contact with some of the French Gothic sculptors who had decorated such cathedrals as Amiens and Chartres. History and tradition are alike silent on this point, but whatever may have been the cause, the effect is most remarkable. His Madonna on the pulpit of the Baptistery of Pisa is no longer an inanimate doll or a half-starved peasant woman, but a majestic Greek or Roman matron with thick wavy hair and ample drapery. Among the pupils of Niccolo Pisano was a certain Fra Guglielmo, who worked much with his master, and frequently executed his designs. He made a pulpit for the church of S. Giovanni at Pistoja, and the *arca* or tomb of S. Domenico at Bologna. St. Dominic was the founder of an order of preaching friars distinguished by their white gowns and black mantles from the brown-frocked brothers of St. Francis. St. Dominic, a man of fiery temper and unscrupulous zeal, did much to further the domination of the Church. Hence he was held in great honour, and some time after his death his remains were deposited in a magnificent tomb in a church dedicated to him

at Bologna. This tomb has been frequently added to, but the original design was a handsome square sarcophagus, sculptured in relief with scenes from the life of the saint. The most striking of these scenes is the death of Napoleone, a nephew of Cardinal Stefano, who was killed by a fall from his horse, and restored to life again by the prayers of St. Dominic. The story is dramatically represented: the dead youth, the prostrate steed, and the crowd of agitated spectators are given in the most natural manner. Fra Guglielmo was present when the sacred relics were transferred to their new resting-place, for he stole a rib, which he secretly conveyed to his own home, the monastery of St. Catherine at Pisa. Here he died, and on his death-bed confessed this crime, for which he easily received absolution. For, as the monkish historian relates, "Piety can absolve from theft." Fra Guglielmo is to be admired, but not to be imitated.

Arnolfo del Cambio, another pupil of Niccolo, was the first sculptor who placed on the tombs two figures drawing away the curtains from the head and feet of the deceased. This poetical design at once became very popular, but under later artists lost its original simplicity. Arnolfo was the architect of the great municipal palace of Florence, the Palazzo Vecchio, where from the tall *campanile* (bell-tower) a deep-toned bell, called *La vacca* (the cow), resounded through Florence in times of danger. The Or' San Michele, the church of S. Croce, and the cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, famous buildings frequently referred to in these

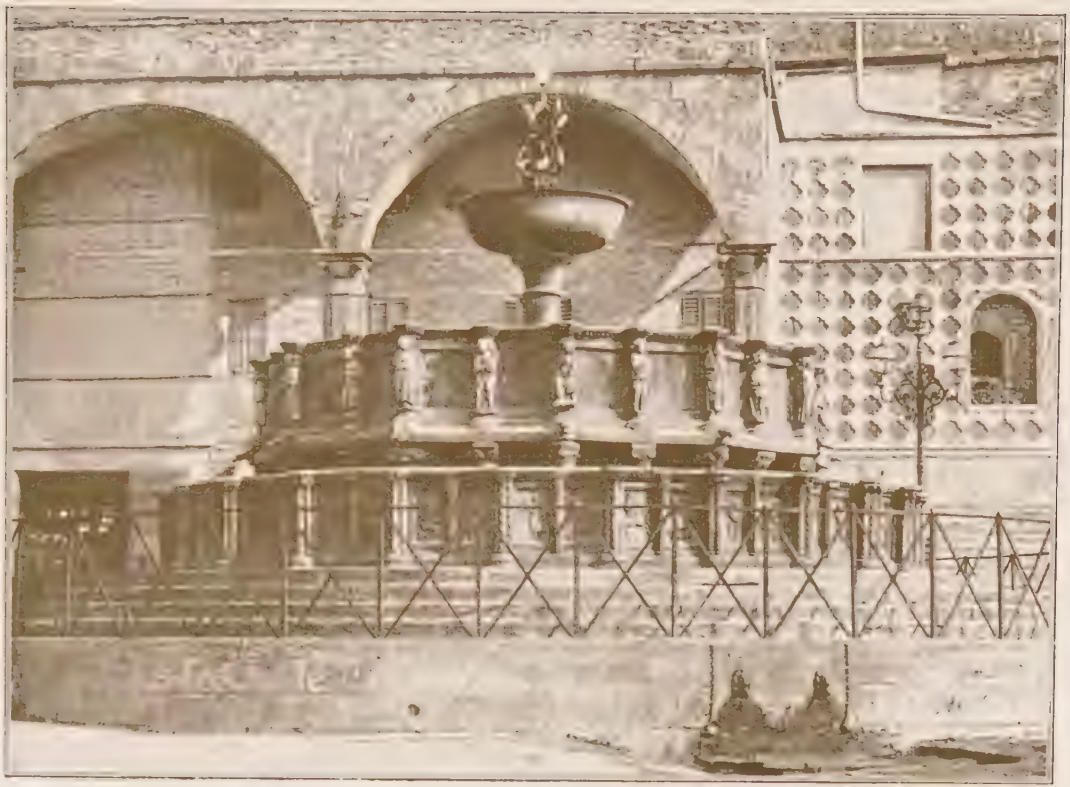
pages, were also built from designs by Arnolfo. A more distinguished sculptor than either Fra Guglielmo or Arnolfo was Giovanni Pisano, the son of Niccolo; but although constantly associated with his father, his work shows little classical influence, and his figures resemble in their ugliness those of the German Gothic sculptors. By him are the pulpits of St. Andrea at Pistoja and the cathedral at Pisa; but the latter, now broken up, is stored in the cathedral museum. Giovanni's chief architectural work is the cloister which surrounds the Campo Santo at Pisa already referred to.

Like most sculptors of the time, this artist designed many beautiful tombs in various Tuscan and Umbrian cities, and to see these tombs we must in imagination travel many miles from Florence. High up on the hillside of Cortona is the church and tomb of St. Margaret, designed by him. This St. Margaret is not the famous saint of that name whose home was at Antioch, but a beautiful Tuscan girl, who, when driven from home by a cruel stepmother, fell into evil company, and led a disreputable life. Among her lovers was a gentleman of Montepulciano, who, while returning to his home, was murdered by brigands; but his faithful dog came to Margaret and led her to the place where they had concealed the body. Overcome with grief and horror, Margaret determined to reform, and barefooted, with a rope round her neck, she climbed the steep streets of Cortona, and after much opposition was admitted into the Franciscan monastery. Here the sanctity of her life, with its

unceasing prayer and penance, won for her the forgiveness she craved, and on her death she was canonised as a saint. The church is now much altered, and St. Margaret's bones lie in a silver shrine behind the high altar, but her former tomb is still preserved. The graceful figure of the saint rests in profound repose, her dog at her feet, while over her head two lovely angels hold a canopy.

From Cortona to Perugia is no great distance; both are cities of Etruscan origin and occupy commanding situations overlooking a large tract of country. Pope Benedict VIII. died at Perugia of poison administered in a basket of figs, given with the connivance of Philippe le Bel, King of France. His tomb, also, was designed by Giovanni. On either side the sleeping figure of the Pope rise twisted columns inlaid with coloured marble, and adorned with tiny cherubs. Unfortunately they were terribly damaged by the French soldiers quartered in the church in the time of the Emperor Napoleon I.

To the student of Italian history the piazza, or cathedral square of Perugia, possesses a painful interest. Many a time have its stones been washed by the blood of the young, brave, and beautiful: the rival families of Baglioni and Oddi fighting against each other, or the Baglioni amongst themselves. After the last and most terrible strife, when even the cathedral afforded no sanctuary, the sacred edifice was cleansed with holy wine and reconsecrated before any religious service could be held there. Undisturbed by civil broil, architects, painters, and sculptors pursued their even way. Protected by



Fountain at Perugia

Decorated by Niccolo and Giovanni Pisano

all parties, it was only in times of very special danger that they fled from one city to another, taking with them the implements of their craft, and finding new employment always open to them.

Let us now, in fancy, linger on the square beneath the bronze Lion and Griffin who frown from the grim walls of the Palazzo Vecchio, for here, nearly two hundred years before that terrible slaughter, Niccolo Pisano and Giovanni his son decorated the beautiful fountain which is still the joy of all who behold it. We know how proud the citizens were of it by the law they enacted for its preservation, "neither beasts, barrels, nor unwashed hands" were allowed to sully the pure water brought with much difficulty to this great height. For them "seven troughs" were provided outside the city. An iron railing still protects the fountain, and leaning over this you may study the carved panels, a veritable library of romance and history; for here are legends, fables, Bible stories, and emblematical figures. One of these, a woman holding in her hands three fishes, is interesting on account of two amusing anecdotes which may be related in connection with it.

The Perugians were very greedy people and particularly fond of certain small fishes, called *lasche*, which come from the beautiful silver lake of Trasimene, near which, if you have read Roman history, you will remember that a famous battle took place. It fell on a day when Perugia was at war with Arezzo, a not uncommon occurrence, for each little town on its own particular hilltop had always some deadly quarrel with a neighbour, that the

Aretines took certain Perugian prisoners whom, for a joke and to show their contempt, they hung outside the walls with strings of *lasche* attached to their braces, and in company with them a tabby cat, in allusion to the *Raspanti* (scratchers), a nickname given to the rich Perugian merchants.

Another anecdote about the *lasche* is of later date. Buffalmacco, a Florentine artist, was employed by the Perugians to paint on the piazza a likeness of their patron saint Bishop Ercolano, who was murdered by the Goths under Totila in the sixth century after Christ. Buffalmacco built up a scaffold which he covered with matting to screen himself from the public gaze, but all to no purpose, for every idle citizen must needs stop, give his opinion on the work, and ask what day it would be finished. The painter, who was much addicted to practical jokes, determined to be revenged on them. He first showed them the almost completed picture, and afterwards placed, as was the custom, upon the gold halo a gilded plaster crown; this, however, he composed entirely of the small fishes. He then paid his bills and vanished. Some days elapsed before the trick was discovered, and then far and near mounted men were sent out by the enraged governor in search of the truant. Buffalmacco was by this time safe in Florence, relating his adventures to a circle of delighted friends. Thereupon the baffled Perugians passed a resolution to have the crown remodelled by one of their own artists, and from henceforth to speak as much evil as possible of all Florentines, Buffalmacco in particular.

CHAPTER III

THE REVIVAL OF PAINTING

GIOTTO DI BONDONE (GIOTTO)
(1276–1336)

More than six hundred years ago, near the village of Vespignano, fourteen miles from Florence, a boy, ten years old, took care of his father's sheep. Unlike the other boys of his age, who amused themselves by setting snares for small birds, tormenting the big grasshoppers, or sleeping in the sunshine, this boy spent every leisure moment in drawing the objects that he saw around him. He had neither pencil nor paper, but traced his pictures with a stick on the ground, or with a sharp flint on smooth fragments of rock.

At this time there were many artists in Italy, some of whom worked in what was then called the Greek manner, by us the Byzantine. This was the method practised at Byzantium (Constantinople), which is still used for the *icons*, the sacred pictures, of the Russian Church. They were skilful craftsmen rather than artists; their pictures are ablaze with colour and enriched with precious stones; and the gold background and rich-hued robes of the

Madonna are worked in an infinite variety of beautiful patterns. Unfortunately each artist in his turn copied the pictures of those who went before him, and never thought of taking for his model a real mother and her babe, so that in every succeeding generation their pictures, made after one fashion, became less like nature.

Besides the Byzantine painters there were other Italian artists who were equally untrue to nature, and not nearly so skilful. They also painted Madonnas, very ugly ones, with staring eyes, stiff portraits supposed to represent St. Francis, and terrible crucifixions, with the dying Saviour writhing in agony on His cross.

Among the artists then at work in Florence was Giovanni Cimabue. So highly was he esteemed, that when he had finished his great picture, the "Rucellai Madonna," in Santa Maria Novella, the delighted people carried it in procession with songs and dances from the studio to the church. Such at least was the story told by Vasari, and long believed by everybody. Alas for fame! Many of the best modern critics have now decided that the "Rucellai Madonna" was not painted by Cimabue, but by Duccio, an artist from Siena, and the same story is related of another Madonna painted by Duccio for his native town. Among the many pictures called by Cimabue's name hardly any are now recognised as his work. This much at any rate appears certain, that although Cimabue was an excellent painter of the old style, the first great artist of the new was the little shepherd boy

from the Mugello. Vasari relates that Cimabue, riding one day over the sun-browned slopes, came upon the boy, who had just drawn upon a rock a lifelike picture of a white curly-horned sheep. The great artist was so impressed by the boy's remarkable talent, that he at once decided to take him as his pupil. It is probable that his parents' permission was not difficult to obtain, for in the peasant's cottage there were many mouths to feed with but little to put into them, and Ambrogiotto Bondone, always known by his pet name of Giotto, came to Florence to run errands and grind colours in the studio of his new master. Imagine the delight of the child, when once he had got over his natural grief at parting with his parents, at leaving the rough life in that dreary country for beautiful Florence, the city of the lily, where many sculptors and painters were already at work.

> "That Cimabue smiled upon the lad
> *At the first stroke which passed what he could do,*
> Or else his Virgin's smile had never had
> Such sweetness in't. All great men who foreknew
> Their heirs in art, for art's sake have been glad."
>
> —E. B. Browning.

Vasari, writing about two hundred years later, says, "Giotto, although born amid incapable artists at a time when all methods of art had long been entombed amid the ruins of war, succeeded in reviving art and restoring her to a path which may be said to be a true one." Giotto was honoured in his lifetime and his work lives after him. Still

Coiliste Mhuire Gan Smal Luimneach

for many centuries his fame was obscured, and it is only within the last fifty years that people have begun to understand how much all succeeding generations of artists owe to the peasant boy of the Mugello. The reason of this neglect is not far to seek. When Giotto painted, and for some time afterwards, it was the custom to decorate the interiors of churches and public buildings by painting on the still wet plaster of the new walls; this is called fresco. In the course of years many of these frescoes faded, or were injured by damp. They were then covered up with whitewash, which most people then considered to be neater and more cheerful. Now that a great deal more is known about these old painters, and nearly every one is interested to see their work, however damaged, many of these frescoes have been uncovered. Unfortunately, scraping off whitewash does even more harm than damp, and worse than all, many of them have been repainted by ignorant and incapable artists.

All Giotto's most important paintings are in fresco, and have therefore suffered terribly from all these causes; but yet another misfortune has befallen him, common to all great artists, that to him has been attributed the inferior work of his pupils. Giotto founded a school of artists, who copied his designs and imitated his style. These Giottesque painters decorated many churches, but, unlike their master, they neglected nature, and so, like the earlier Italian artists, their style gradually deteriorated, their colour became poor, their drawing weak, and their latest efforts are beneath all contempt.

It is not at Florence, but at Assisi, a little town on the sunny slopes of the Umbrian hills overlooking the valley of the Tiber, that we must seek for the earliest (and also some of the latest) works of this great artist. Assisi was the home of St. Francis, a good and holy man, who in his life and teaching followed closely the example of his master, Christ. Francesco Bernadone was the son of a rich merchant, and his mother, Madonna Pica, came from sunny Provence, the home of music and song. St. Francis himself had the brightest, most joyous disposition. Often the sleepy burghers of Assisi heard through their dreams the voice of Francis and his gay companions as they paraded at midnight the steep streets of the little town. When war broke out between Assisi and Perugia, Francis, foremost in battle as in the dance, was taken prisoner and languished for a year in captivity. On his return home he was struck down by a fever, and then a great change came upon him. In spite of the vehement opposition of his father, he gave up the world, put on the habit of a monk, and devoted himself to a life of self-denial in imitation of Jesus of Nazareth. At a time when every one was at war he preached of love and peace, gave up his money and his home to live in poverty, and founded an order of wandering friars whose mission was to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, nurse the sick, and comfort the dying. They were to own nothing, and to be the servants of every one, especially the poor.

In honour of St. Francis, whose fame spread far beyond his own country, after his death two beauti-

ful churches, standing one above the other on the steep hillside, were built in his native town, and the interior of both of them decorated by many different painters from Florence, Siena, and Rome. The life of St. Francis with its romantic surrounding had the most important influence on painting, for the legends that gathered round his name provided an inexhaustible storehouse of new subjects. On the wall of the upper church at Assisi are no less than twenty-five scenes all showing incidents, real or imaginary, in the life of the saint.

It is uncertain how many of these separate pictures were by Giotto himself; for it is possible that he may have designed all, but painted only a few. Perhaps the most attractive of the series is the one of which an illustration is given: St. Francis preaching to the birds. You can see there for yourself the quaint simplicity of the design, but no photograph can give any idea of the exquisite colour of the picture, painted chiefly in soft shades of blue and grey. St. Francis had an especial tenderness for all beautiful, innocent creatures: he called the dumb beasts his brothers, the birds his little sisters.

"One day, on his travels with two companions, he lifted up his eyes and saw some trees hard by the road on which sat a great company of birds well-nigh without number. St. Francis marvelled and said to his companions: 'Ye shall wait for me by the way and I will go and preach to my little sisters the birds.' He then went into the field and began to preach to the birds, and immediately those that were on the trees flew down to him, and they

Alinari. Florence

ST. FRANCIS PREACHING TO THE BIRDS

Fresco in the upper church of S. Francesco, Assisi

Giotto

all of them remained still and quiet until St. Francis had made an end of preaching, nor did they depart until he had given them his blessing." In the upper church, besides Giotto's frescoes, there is a large crucifixion by Cimabue, in which rosy cherubs flutter like birds round the head of the dying Saviour.

When Giotto was a middle-aged man he returned to Assisi and painted on the vaulted ceiling of the lower church symbolical pictures of the three vows of the Franciscan order, Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience. In the first of these St. Francis, as the bridegroom, takes as his bride the Lady Poverty, barefooted and clothed in rags: in the second is Chastity, shut up in her strong tower secure against the evil of the world: in the third Obedience, wearing the dress of a monk, holds his finger to his lips as he puts a yoke on the mouth of a friar.

On our return to Florence we must go into the cloister of Santa Maria Novella; for here, close to the north door, is a small fresco of the Nativity, or birth, of the Virgin. Mr. Ruskin, who was one of the first people in England who tried to make others take an interest in everything that is beautiful, was a great admirer of this fresco, which he compares favourably with one by Ghirlandajo, a later painter, which is in the choir of the church. Here is one thing, he says, which you did not see in Ghirlandajo's fresco unless you were very clever and looked hard for it, "the baby, and you are never likely to see a more true piece of Giotto's work in

the world, a round-faced, small-eyed thing tied up in a bundle."

It is a very queer baby, rolled up in swaddling-bands like a mummy; but this is still the custom in Italy, where the poor babies cannot put their dear little rosy toes in their mouths, as they want and ought to do. Still this is a real baby, not a doll, or a small grown-up person, and as Giotto had several children of his own, who were all very ugly, this is perhaps a portrait of one of them.

Santa Maria Novella was the church of the preaching friars, followers of St. Dominic. Santa Croce, where we are now going, belonged to the Franciscans, the monks of the Order of St. Francis, and here two chapels, painted by Giotto, have now been freed from whitewash.

In the chapel of the Peruzzi family the subjects of the frescoes are events taken from the life of St. John the Baptist. In the principal scene Herod is seated at a feast, under a graceful canopy decorated with statues of pagan gods. To the right a musician is playing on a viol. Salome stands before the king, holding in her upraised hands a lyre; while a soldier brings in the head of the saint, cut off at her request. To the left is a separate scene, where she presents the bleeding trophy to her wicked mother.

In the Bardi chapel, which belonged to the family of that name, are scenes from the life of St. Francis, the most important of these showing the deathbed of the saint. Your first impression of this picture will probably be one of disappointment. The kneeling monks, with their shaven crowns, all look so

Alinari, Florence

DEATH OF ST. FRANCIS

Fresco in the Bardi Chapel, Church of Santa Croce, Florence

Giotto

Alinari, Florence

HEAD OF JOHN THE BAPTIST PRESENTED TO HEROD

Fresco in the Peruzzi Chapel, Church of Santa Croce, Florence

much alike, that the effect is monotonous. This is not really the case, for in each one there is a distinct attempt at a portrait, and in the man behind the head of the saint, a successful one. This man, whose hand is raised as if about to shade his dazzled eyes, is the only one among the brethren who sees the vision Heaven sent to comfort the dying saint, whose eyes, blind to things on earth, still in faith saw the golden streets of heaven, the gates of pearl opening to receive him. The others anxiously watch his changing countenance, kiss the sacred wounds on his hands and feet, and one, like the doubting Thomas, thrusts his hand into his side. For to St. Francis, and a few other saints of especial holiness, were given the *stigmata* (marks like those made by the nails and spear on the hands and feet and side of the crucified Saviour).

The time at which Giotto lived was a very interesting one in history, for it saw the revival in Florence not only of sculpture and painting but also of literature. The simple shepherd boy, who remained unspoiled by flattery, enjoyed the friendship of the greatest men of the age: Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. To Dante, indeed, we know that he was united in the tenderest bonds of friendship, and even after the time when the latter was driven into exile and at last died at Ravenna, they never failed to keep in touch with each other. Dante, in his "Divine Comedy," sings—

> "In painting Cimabue thought that he
> Should hold the field; now Giotto has the cry,
> So that the other's fame is growing dim."

In the Bargello, once the palace of the Podestà, the chief magistrate of Florence, was a chapel afterwards converted into a prison. Here, fifty years ago, under a coating of whitewash, was found a large fresco by Giotto or his pupils, which was painted to commemorate a short period of peace between the rival factions in Florence, the Neri and Bianchi (black and white). It represents Paradise, where, in two groups, are many historical persons, among them Dante, with his friends Corso Donati and Brunetto Latini, Charles of Anjou, and Giotto himself. Dante, the lover of Beatrice, wears his lady's colours, red, white, and green. The green here has been repainted chocolate, for when the portrait was rediscovered, this combination of colours, now adopted by the kings of Italy, was regarded as democratic and dangerous.

Soon after the fresco was finished quarrels broke out afresh, Dante was sent into exile, and six years later met Giotto at Padua, where the latter was engaged on his latest, and, in some ways, most important work. This was a chapel built by Enrico Scrovengi in expiation of his father's sins, for the elder Scrovengi had made his money as a usurer, and over such the devil has especial power. The ground on which the chapel was built was formerly a Roman amphitheatre, but had already been dedicated to the Virgin Mary, an annual festival being held here in her honour. When, therefore, Scrovengi built his new chapel, it was fitting that the decorations should contain a series of scenes from the life of the Virgin and her parents.

Alinari. Florence

PORTRAIT OF DANTE

Detail from a Fresco of Paradise, National Museum, Florence

School of Giotto

In Protestant countries, where the divinity of the Virgin is not recognised, these stories are unfamiliar, but this was not the case in Italy either then or at the present time. They are taken chiefly from the writings known as the Protevangelion and the Gospel of Mary; but it seems possible that Giotto was acquainted with another version of the legends in a fourteenth-century manuscript, entitled "The History of the Most Holy Family."

There was a devout man named Joachim of the tribe of Judah, who had to wife Anna, a princess of the house of David, but they had no children. When, therefore, Joachim entered the temple bringing with him as an offering a third part of all that he possessed, and he had great riches, the High Priest drove him from the altar, saying, "Thou, Joachim, art not worthy to enter this temple, seeing that God has not added His blessing to you, as in your life you have had no seed." So Joachim went away weeping, and remained in the sheepfold. His wife Anna, deserted by her husband, sorrowed alone in the home, and her maid Judith taunted her with her barrenness. In the garden she watched the sparrows feeding their young ones, and moaned, saying, "I alone am accursed before God." When, however, five months had gone by, an angel appeared to her as she lay in sleep, and said, "Be comforted, rise up, and meet your husband at the Golden Gate of the Temple of Jerusalem, for a daughter shall be born to you." At the time of the vision that came to Anna, the angel Raphael also appeared to Joachim, bidding him return to his wife. This he did, having

first made a sacrifice, and at the Golden Gate the faithful pair were once more united. A child was born, who grew up endowed with all grace and wisdom, and when at three years of age she was presented in the temple, to the surprise of the by-standers, she made her way alone up the great stairs.

When the time came for her marriage the High Priest gathered together all the marriageable men of the house of David, and their rods were laid together in the House of God. When morning came Joseph's rod had brought forth blossoms, and he was united to Mary, the unsuccessful suitors breaking their rods before the altar. After her betrothal Mary returned to her own home, and here the angel Gabriel appeared to her, announcing that she should become the Mother of the Redeemer. Such is the brief outline of a story very popular in the history of Italian art, and represented by Giotto with great power and dramatic feeling.

The chapel is an oblong building, lighted on one side by long, narrow windows, and the frescoes are arranged round the walls in three horizontal lines. On one side of the central arch kneels Mary, on the other the angel Gabriel, who comes to announce the birth of the promised Messiah. The angel, though stiff, is not wanting in dignity; the Virgin, with her coils of closely-plaited hair, is almost beautiful. If you could compare her with the women in the fresco at Santa Maria Novella, you would realise the improvement made by the artist in the course of a long industrious life.

Giotto had a merry humour and an independent mind. The Pope, Boniface VIII., sent to demand a specimen of his work. With one sweep of his pencil he drew a perfect circle; this, and this only, would he send, and the O of Giotto has passed into a proverb. When the King of Naples asked him his idea of his kingdom, he painted an ass laden with a crown and sceptre. He travelled about Italy, and painted in Rome, Naples, Arezzo, Lucca, Ferrara; and also, it is said, at Avignon in France, at one time the residence of the Popes.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST FLORENTINE SCULPTORS

ANDREA PISANO AND ORCAGNA

(1277–1337)

Giotto, besides being the first important painter in Florence, was also a sculptor and architect. He designed the lovely campanile of the cathedral, which still stands pink, white and grey, like a sunset sky, untouched by time. With him worked Andrea Pisano, a pupil of Giovanni Pisano, and, after the death of Giotto, Andrea continued his work.

Round the lower storeys of the tower are rows of carved panels containing a variety of subjects, some taken from Bible history, others with symbolical figures of Sciences, Arts, and Industries. Above these are another series of reliefs in four groups of seven, and higher still are niches containing statues, one of which, a bearded man called familiarly "*Il Zuccone*," or the bald head, is one of the finest works of the sculptor Donatello, about whom we shall hear presently. One of Giotto's own panels, Pastoral Life, shows that the master in his old age had not forgotten his early life among the sheep-folds, for

Alinari, Florence

SCULPTURED PANEL

JABAL THE SHEPHERD

From the Campanile of the Cathedral, Florence

Giotto

once again he has carved on stone the little curly-horned sheep, and a puppy who eyes them expectantly, not knowing whether to attack or to play.

Andrea Pisano, although not a native-born Florentine, was the founder of a school of sculpture in that city, where alone in all the towns of Italy the art of sculpture attained a high degree of perfection. It is true that there were many sculptors at Siena, where also was a school of painting, which, in its early days, rivalled that of Florence, but, with the one exception of Jacopo della Quercia, they never attained the same skill, nor exercised the same widely-spread influence.

To Andrea was entrusted the construction of bronze doors to the Baptistery. The Baptistery was one of the oldest buildings in Florence, and was built on the foundations of a temple of Mars. In pagan days, when Florence was already a city, Mars was worshipped as its patron saint. When paganism was driven out by Christianity Mars was transformed into San Giovanni, and was believed to fulfil the same good offices to his worshippers as his heathen predecessor. These doors, cast in bronze, are decorated with twenty lozenge-shaped panels, each containing a single incident in the life of John the Baptist. In the broad, simple treatment of these subjects, Andrea set an example successfully followed by the later Florentine sculptors. The first Pisan sculptors, Niccolo, Giovanni, and their pupils, had, like their predecessors the Comacenes, a tendency to overcrowd their reliefs with small figures. The effect is unpleasing; the

eye becomes weary and the brain confused in the effort to understand all that is going on, especially when two or more scenes take place in the same composition.

Near here, in 1280, Arnolfo del Cambio, the pupil of Niccolo Pisano, had built an open chapel or shrine, to contain a famous miracle-working Madonna, painted by Ugolino of Siena. In one of the many party struggles which disturbed Florence, the granary and chapel were burned down, and it seems likely that the original picture then perished. Certainly the present picture is not as early as the time of Ugolino, who lived before Cimabue or Giotto. The miracles, however, went on all the same, and as nobody asked any inconvenient questions, money continued to pour in from pious worshippers. A fine building, half palace, half temple, was built, which afterwards became a church,[1] and was decorated on every side with beautiful statues. In 1348 the plague visited Florence, and in four months swept away 100,000 persons. Many of these left all they possessed "for the honour of the Holy Virgin Mary and the benefit of the poor." From this fund a tabernacle was erected on which Orcagna lavished all his skill. Precious stones, mosaic, enamel, and gilding, together with painting and reliefs sculptured in marble, unite to make it a "miracle of loveliness."

At the close of the thirteenth century there arose at Orvieto, a small town on the road between Florence and Rome, one of the most beautiful

[1] Known as Or' San Michele.

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

Two Panels from the South Door of the Baptistery of S. Giovanni, Florence

Andrea Pisano

Gothic cathedrals in the whole of Italy. It owes its perfection not only to the qualities of the painting and sculpture with which it is decorated, but to the fact that it was designed entirely by one architect, Lorenzo Maitani of Siena, who lived long enough to bring the work to completion.

The situation of Orvieto is a striking one, for the town, though mean, squalid, and too large for its present population, is perched like an eagle's eyrie on the top of crags apparently insurmountable. The difficulties encountered in building seemed only to stimulate the enthusiasm of the people, who thronged from all parts to assist in the good work, and the cathedral was consecrated by Pope Boniface VIII. within eight years of laying the foundation.

From far distant quarries blocks of marble were floated on rafts down the rivers or dragged with much labour over heavy mountain roads by oxen. These oxen still form a striking feature of the Tuscan and Umbrian landscapes. They plough the heavy soil and drag huge loads in primitive carts, crudely daubed with colour. These carts with their simple harness, a heavy wooden bar laid across the necks of the oxen so that they can turn neither to right nor left except together, can hardly have changed since they drew their precious burdens up the steep streets of Orvieto. At Laon, in France, the cows who served the same office, carved in stone, still look down from the summit of the cathedral tower. Ah! these oxen, unsuited for the hurry and bustle of to-day, they were old even at

the building of Orvieto; their solemn eyes have something in them of mystery as the great beasts sway heavily along with their peculiar loose-jointed action. For them the modern world goes by too quickly; they shrink and tremble at any unfamiliar sound.

The Etruscans, who once swayed Northern Italy, were also large-eyed, solemn folk, heavy of limb, slow of movement, and for them these oxen must have provided a fitting mode of progression. The wooded hills were not then rent asunder for the passage of the snorting, fire-breathing railway engine, the scorcher was not, the motor car did not defile the sweet air with a trail of evil odour.

In fancy you may see the slow procession of the harvest wains heaped up with golden maize, or a party of noble ladies clothed in Tyrian purple, their gorgeous gold trinkets glittering in the sun, pass majestically from the hill city to the plains. Time saving was no object, life glided on slowly, and to those days, not our own, belong the giant oxen of Tuscany.

To eyes accustomed to French Gothic architecture, with its delicate traceries, slender pinnacles, and heaven-aspiring lines, Italian Gothic is seldom entirely pleasing. The dark and white marble laid alternately in horizontal lines looks tawdry, and the fashion of adding on a façade, which is not really part of the building, suggests theatrical display unworthy of a structure whole and perfect in all its parts. Still the cathedral of Orvieto, like that of Siena, is a wonder of beauty, fine with

all the wealth of marble, gold, painting, and mosaic that man's ingenuity could devise. It is, moreover, finished, and not, like many Italian churches, a sham marble front tacked on to a crumbling brick building.

Niccolo Pisano had died fifteen years before its foundation, but probably Giovanni, Andrea, and Nino Pisano all contributed designs, for all the best sculptors of Florence and Siena were employed, and their work has served to inspire many generations of artists.

Nino Pisano, the son of Andrea, is the last important artist of the Pisan school. His figures of women are distinguished by a peculiar sweetness frequently degenerating into sentimentality. The Madonna della Rosa in the little Gothic church of Santa Maria della Spina is his finest statue. This church, once a sailors' chapel, was rebuilt by pious Pisan merchants in the palmy days of their city's maritime prosperity.

It stands like a carved and jewelled casket on the edge of the now dull and useless river, once crowded with strange craft, and resounding with the merry voices of seamen outward bound.

Giovanni Balduccio, a pupil of Andrea, wandered far afield, and his most celebrated work is the monument to Fra Pietro da Verona in the church of St. Eustorgio at Milan. This saint, familiarly known as St. Peter Martyr, was a follower of St. Dominic and a violent persecutor of heretics. On the road from Como to Milan he was attacked by hired assassins and brutally murdered. He de-

served his fate, for he had brought down punishment on many innocent persons merely for having opinions of which he did not approve. Even among his own adherents he was more feared than loved. Among the Dominicans he is held in great honour, and appears frequently in pictures, usually with a bleeding wound in his head.

Alinari. Florence

MARRIAGE OF THE VIRGIN

Detail from the Shrine in the Or' San Michele, Florence

Andrea Orcagna

CHAPTER V

JACOPO DELLA QUERCIA, OF SIENA

(1374–1438)

We have already had occasion to speak more than once of Siena as the home of painters and sculptors hardly inferior to those of Florence. Siena was in other ways the rival of Florence, and constant war was waged between them. The Sienese also quarrelled desperately among themselves, and it was owing to the disturbed condition of his native city that Jacopo della Quercia was so frequently obliged to seek work in other towns.

Among all the beautiful hill towns of Tuscany hardly one is more beautiful, and none has a more interesting history than Siena. It is built on a double-crowned hill in the midst of a strange undulating country, in spring clothed with soft verdure, but brown and bare in the late summer. On the highest of the two summits is the cathedral, less than half the size that was originally intended, but still fine enough to attract the attention even of Addison, who, travelling through Italy intent on Roman antiquities, passed over in scornful silence nearly all mediæval buildings. He says of it: "It is a masterpiece of Gothic architecture. One would

wonder to see the vast labour that has been laid out on this single cathedral."

On the other hill is a sloping shell-shaped piazza, on the lower extremity of which is the Palazzo Pubblico, with a tower taller even than that of the Palazzo Vecchio at Florence, and at the upper edge is the Fonte Gaia. Once upon a time the fountain was adorned with a beautiful antique statue of Venus, but on an occasion when Siena was more than ordinarily distracted by civil broils, there rose one in council who asked what good fortune could be expected in a city where a heathen goddess ruled supreme. On this the multitude tore her from her pedestal, broke her beautiful white limbs, and buried the fragments in Florentine ground, thinking thereby to convey ill luck to their enemies.

Then Jacopo was called upon to provide a more suitable decoration, and round the sides of the tank he placed a marble parapet with statues; on the inside were carved reliefs and a figure of the Madonna, while out of the water rose the uncouth heads of wolves and dolphins, spouting water from their gaping jaws. It was many years before the fountain was finished, and Jacopo, "though a polite and modest man," was much abused by his fellow citizens, who were constantly sending for him when engaged in other work, and threatening all kinds of pains and penalties if he did not return. In Florence, as you will hear later, he was one of the competitors for the new bronze gates of the Baptistery, and Vasari says that he sculptured a relief over one of the doors of the cathedral. In this the Virgin, in

Alinari, Florence

TOMB OF ILARIA DEL CARETTO, CATHEDRAL, LUCCA

Jacopo della Quercia

an almond-shaped glory, called from its shape the *Mandorla*, ascends to heaven surrounded by angels. On the right kneels St. Thomas, on the left is a bear climbing a pear-tree. But the credit of this charming composition is now taken away from the Sienese sculptor, and given to Nanni di Banco, a pupil of Donatello.

At Bologna, celebrated for its university, is a fine but unfinished church dedicated to St. Petronius, an early bishop of little importance, who received no honour except in his native city. Outside the great door are fifteen reliefs, with scenes from the creation sculptured by this artist. So fine are they that Raphael and Michael Angelo adapted the design, the former for the ceiling of the Loggia of the Vatican, the latter for the Sistine Chapel in the same place.

Among all the beautiful works of Quercia none equals in interest the monument of Ilaria del Caretto, wife of Paul Guinigi, the tyrannical lord of Lucca. When he was driven into exile by his exasperated subjects the monument was broken up, but the lovely figure of the lady is fortunately uninjured. Ilaria in her lifetime was tall and stately, and her long, bright brown hair, when loosed from confinement, fell rippling to her knees. But the pestilence, which spared none, struck her down in the glory of her youth, and when she died her weeping servants clothed her in a long, soft gown, buttoned close under her round chin, and crossed her fair hands meekly on her breast. In this wise the sculptor has represented her, a hound, the model of fidelity, at

her feet, and round her bier are wound heavy garlands, held up by winged children.

The sacristan will tell you that when Mr. Ruskin visited Lucca the figure of Ilaria was placed against the side wall of the cathedral. The marble base had been taken away to Florence, and no entreaties would induce the Florentines to part with it. When King Humbert and his queen, Margherita, visited Lucca the latter was moved to compassion at the forlorn aspect of the fair marble form, and so wrought upon the king that he insisted that the base should be restored and the effigy placed as you now see it.

The glory of the cathedral of Lucca is the Santa Volta, a great black figure of Christ on the Cross, so old that it is said to be the work of Nicodemus. Three times a year, clad in a golden Byzantine garment, strewn with jewels, it is shown to the outside world, and thousands of pilgrims stream through the carven shrine, some of them pausing in their wandering through the south transept of the cathedral where Ilaria now lies, undisturbed by trampling footsteps, unconscious of the gaze of the passers-by.

Coronation of the Virgin.

Florence *Fra Angelico*

CHAPTER VI

FRA ANGELICO

(1387–1465)

Fra Angelico, whose name in the world was Guido da Pietro, was the most religious of all painters, at a time when religion exercised more outward influence than it does now. He came from Mugello, that district of the Apennines which was the early home of Giotto. By his unusual talent for painting, which showed itself when he was still very young, he might have enjoyed money and fame, but he preferred to dedicate his life to the service of God, and at twenty years of age entered the Dominican convent at Fiesole. Italy was at this time disturbed by the quarrels of three claimants to the chair of St. Peter, and as the Brotherhood at Fiesole remained faithful to Gregory XII., they were persecuted by the Archbishop of Florence, and had to take refuge at Cortona. By this circumstance at a time when other Florentine painters were studying the scientific side of their art, trying new mixtures of colours, and experimenting in anatomy and perspective, Fra Angelico, in the far away Umbrian city, remained untouched by the progressive spirit of the age.

He painted on in the old manner, giving to his pictures beautiful gold backgrounds, putting the most expensive ultramarine blue into the mantle of the Virgin, but caring little for the proportions of his figures beneath their heavy drapery. With him it was the idea that was to be conveyed, the lesson that was to be taught, that was of real importance. In the preceding century this had been the animating spirit of all painting, but was now being rapidly lost in the desire for effect. As far as art itself is concerned this change was, in many ways, for the better. While in Florence and Venice the pictures became more and more beautiful, at Siena, where the new teaching made no progress, in each generation they became more conventional, and less true to nature.

Few pictures are so truly religious as those painted by the earlier artists of the Renaissance, who put their souls into their work, and dedicated their talents to the service of God and the honour of the Blessed Virgin. For them, in visions, the heavens really opened, and they saw Mary and her Son smiling sweetly upon them. From long dwelling on the subject, they could picture exactly the agony in the garden, follow Christ on His road to Golgotha, stand with the beloved disciple at the foot of the cross, or rise up early to go with Mary Magdalene to the sepulchre. A century later, if a painter thought a patch of light would improve his composition, he would place Mary Magdalene clinging to the cross, dressed in a yellow satin gown, and with golden hair flowing loose on her shoulders.

Alinari, Florence

THE ANNUNCIATION

Church of St. Domenico, Cortona

Fra Angelico

If he wished for a beautiful naked youth, he painted St. Sebastian shot through with arrows; if he wanted a princess in crown and robes, there was St. Catherine or St. Barbara; if a knight slaying a dragon, St. Michael or St. George.

It is in Cortona that we find the first pictures by this artist. Cortona was once an important city, but time has laid low "her diadem of towers" which once rose towards heaven. Nevertheless, there is still much to see here, for it was the home of Signorelli, one of the best Umbrian painters, and the small Etruscan Museum possesses two treasures said to be unique. One is a wonderful bronze lamp; the other the portrait of a lovely lady, painted on a tile, which the man who found it used for some time as the door to his oven. This, if really a Greek painting, is very valuable.

Two of the pictures painted by Fra Angelico at Cortona are *predelles*, the name given to a row of small paintings placed beneath the central picture in an altar-piece. The *predella* usually contains scenes from the life of the Virgin, or saints, and is often of great interest, because in them you see how the artist liked to paint: whereas the large church pictures were either painted to order, or according to a pattern fixed by custom and sanctioned by the Church. This custom of always painting religious subjects after the same pattern was an inheritance from the Byzantine artists: and so fixed was the tradition that even great painters, like Giovanni Bellini and Raphael, continued to arrange their compositions in the same manner as

the first Christian artists. When a new subject was introduced, like the death of St. Francis by Giotto, the same plan was observed, and every one who afterwards painted the death of the saint represented it as taking place in the same manner.

If you look carefully at this picture of the Annunciation, you will see that it is not nearly so simple as it may at first appear. The Virgin sits under a *loggia*, or balcony, opening on to a flowery garden, and before her bows the angel. With upraised finger he announces the glad tidings, she is to be the mother of the Messiah, a privilege longed and hoped for by every Jewish maiden. Even before the time of Fra Angelico, an attempt had been made to give dramatic effect to this interview. The Virgin either starts back, as if in terror, or holds her hand before her eyes, as if dazzled by the radiance of the heavenly visitor. Here her whole attitude expresses dignified humility, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." The angel is intent on the delivery of his message, and no spectators are present to disturb the solemn occasion.

By the small scene in the corner of the picture—Adam and Eve expelled from Paradise—our minds are carried back to the story of man's first sin, when heaven was lost to the human race until the coming of the promised Messiah.

Let us now see what was Fra Angelico's idea of heaven. In the Accademia delle Belle Arti, which is one of the public picture-galleries of Florence, there is a *triptych*, or altar-piece, in three panels. In the centre is Christ seated on a throne, surrounded by

Alinari, Florence

PARADISE

Detail from The Last Judgment, Accademia di Belle Arti, Florence

Fra Angelico

all the powers of heaven. On His left is that terrible mediæval hell which Dante described and in which painters delighted, where fiends torture the souls of the condemned; and on His right is heaven. Here those who in this world had given up all that makes life beautiful are received by angel playmates, and circle with them hand in hand, knee-deep in the rich green grass of a flowery meadow. Clad in white raiment, crowned with roses, they dwell in light everlasting.

The idea was not a new one; the Greeks also imagined the souls of the just wandering in Elysian fields bright with golden asphodel. Here the sun ever shines, sorrow, care, and pain are no more, and the toil-worn souls return to the innocent pleasures of childhood. But the Paradise of Fra Angelico is reserved for monks, whereas, hard though it may be to give up the world and its pleasures, it is nobler to live there, exposed to its temptations and yet resist evil.

In the same gallery are a number of small pictures which once formed the panels of a treasure press in the church of the Annunziata. One of them represents the Flight into Egypt. When painting this the artist must have had in his mind the Umbrian landscape that spread beneath him for miles and miles from the walls of Cortona. For here are the hills outlined against the sky, with small castellated towns dotted far and near on the barren slopes, the dark cypresses by the roadside and on every hedge, giving forth their perfume when crushed under the feet of the traveller,

and flowers innumerable. Joseph tramps sturdily along, carrying the cooking vessels which form all their worldly wealth, and the ass, untrammelled by rein, picks her way carefully as if mindful of her precious burden, Mary and the holy child.

With the downfall of Pope Alexander V., Fra Angelico and his fellow monks returned to Fiesole, and soon afterwards Cosimo de' Medici presented to them the Convent of San Marco, which had formerly belonged to the monks of San Silvestro.

In this quiet retreat the years glided peacefully by, and the gentle monk, undisturbed by the broils of the tumultuous city around him, worked on patiently to adorn his beloved home. When Cosimo offered him the Archbishopric of Florence he refused it, but advised that Brother Antonio should be elected. This was done, and Antonio proved in every way fitted for his position.

The Convent of San Marco is now preserved as a national monument. No barefooted brothers tend the straggling rose-bushes, or pace silently the echoing cloisters: the whitewashed cells are empty: the work of Fra Angelico alone remains, a silent witness to the past. There, in the great cloister, hangs Christ on the Cross, at the foot of which kneels St. Dominic. In the chapter-house is a large scene of the Crucifixion, with groups of spectators, many of whom are portraits. In the *lunettes* (semicircular pictures) over the door leading from the cloister are St. Peter Martyr, who holds his finger to his lips enjoining silence; St. Dominic with his scourge, emblematic of monkish discipline; St. Thomas

Alinari, Florence

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Fresco from a cell in the Convent of S. Marco, Florence

Fra Angelico

Alinari, Florence

CHRIST AS A PILGRIM RECEIVED BY TWO DOMINICANS

Cloister of S. Marco, Florence

Fra Angelico

Aquinas with his book; and, over the entrance to the hospital, or refuge for strangers, Christ, as a pilgrim, received by two Dominicans.

Could there be a more beautiful conception of Christ than this? Though clad in raiment of camel's hair this is no worn ascetic, with haggard countenance and matted locks; His hair falls softly on either side of His comely countenance, His eyes, soft yet earnest, gaze intently at His hosts, as if He would say, "I am a stranger, take ye Me in."

Over the cloister on three sides of the square were the dormitories of the monks; at first open, but now divided into cells.

For each member of the brotherhood Fra Angelico, assisted by his brother, Fra Benedetto, painted a separate picture. This Fra Benedetto was a skilful painter of miniature, and many of the choir books in the library of San Marco are his work. Among the most beautiful of the old wall paintings is that where Christ, risen from the dead, appears to Mary Magdalene. There is a garden bounded by a rustic wooden paling, a rock-hewn tomb, the early morning light creeping over the sky behind the dark cypresses, and every flower, every blade of grass, white with the pearly dew. Mary Magdalene has come early to the sepulchre and meets her risen Lord, no longer bowed with grief and crowned with thorns, but clad in a white garment, "mystic, wonderful." No wonder with eyes blinded with fast-falling tears she does not know Him, and grieving afresh over the loss of the beloved remains, supposes Him to be the gardener, and implores Him to tell her what

has been done with her Master's body! Each of the cells of the younger monks, who were under the immediate supervision of the prior, contains a crucifix by Fra Benedetto.

On the walls of the cell once occupied by Brother Antonio, afterwards the Archbishop of Florence, is a fresco of Christ descending into Hades, the place of departed spirits. There is an ancient superstition that those who died in faith, not having received the promise, could not enter heaven, but awaited in the place of shadow the coming of the promised Messiah. Headed by Adam with his long white beard, they crowd around the Saviour, who is enveloped in the golden *aura* or glory which symbolises a pure spirit and perfect life. Beyond the prior's cell, which is reached after passing through a small chapel, are the narrow rooms once inhabited by Savonarola, and where his crucifix, hair shirt, a banner he carried when preaching, together with some wood from his burning pyre, are still shown. Beneath a Madonna by Fra Bartolommeo, who became one of his disciples, is a bronze bust of this remarkable man; the wasted features and sunken eyes telling of a strong spirit chained in a body made frail by penance and labour.

Girolamo Savonarola, who first entered the Dominican order at Bologna, took up his residence at San Marco in 1483. He at once set himself to oppose the despotism of the Medici, who from being merely bankers and merchants had now become rulers of Florence. He preached especially against their gay luxurious court, prophe-

Alinari, Florence

PORTRAIT OF FRA GIOVANNI DA FIESOLE (ANGELICO) AND LUCA SIGNORELLI

Detail from the Fresco of the Preaching of Antichrist, Orvieto Cathedral

Luca Signorelli

sying that God would speedily punish them for their sins, but for some time his words had no effect. It was not until the French army, under Charles VIII., had entered Tuscany that the people remembered that they had received their warning. Lorenzo's strong hand had been removed by death, and the ship of state, guided by his feeble son Piero, drifted rapidly to destruction. The French king, who professed to come in friendship, carried off everything of value that he could secure, and continued his march to Rome. The people now listened willingly enough to the voice of the preacher, the republic was restored, and Savonarola set about his work of purification. Christ was to be the king, all the heathen pageants were put an end to, and in the streets during Lent and Advent bonfires were lit, whose flames were fed with priceless treasures, the men contributing their books and pictures, the women their beautiful clothes and jewels. Bands of white-robed children, called *Piagnoni*, went about from house to house calling upon the people to bring their most cherished possessions, and even stopping women in the street and demanding their false hair, of which, to judge from the elaborate head-dresses in the pictures, they must have worn great quantities.

From the pulpit of the cathedral Savonarola denounced the wickedness and corruption of the papal court, while famine and pestilence walked the streets of Florence. The Pope excommunicated the friar, and then the Florentines, fearing that harm might be done to their trade if the papal

interdict were enforced, turned against Savonarola and demanded his life. The mob laid siege to San Marco, and Savonarola and his friend Domenico gave themselves up as prisoners; Fra Silvestro, who lacked courage, had hidden himself from the fury of the people, but was also taken. It would take too long to dwell on all the details of the ghastly story, for they were tortured, and finally burned to death. Savonarola, like Archbishop Cranmer under similar circumstances, recanted under the agony of the rack, but on coming to himself was filled with horror and shame. He died bravely confessing his faith, and exhorting those about him to do likewise.

It is quite impossible to describe all the frescoes that were the life-work of the devoted artist monk. One detail, however, in the Sermon on the Mount must be noticed, as it frequently occurs in other places. Judas, the renegade apostle, has the *black* halo which denotes one who has fallen from grace. This symbol was derived from the early Byzantine artists, and is still used in the *icons* painted in the Greek convents. Besides the numerous wall paintings, there are at San Marco three exquisite painted panels, which formed part of reliquaries. These reliquaries were cases made to contain the remains of holy persons supposed to have the power of working miracles, and no expense was spared to make the shrines worthy of their precious contents. Two of the three were brought here from Santa Maria Novella, and though the precious stones which encrusted them have been removed, the

colours of Fra Angelico, undimmed by time, shine with the brightness of jewels. In the finest of them, called Madonna della Stella, behind the Virgin, is a golden *aura*, with bright rays enveloping the whole figure, and on the outer frame angels playing on musical instruments. The child is very unlike a real baby, but the face of the Madonna as she bends towards him is full of sweetness tinged with melancholy. She knows, as all loving mothers know, how soon the baby who now clings to her and looks to her for everything will need her no longer, and to Mary, the mother of Jesus, must have been ever present the foreboding of what her son was to suffer in His short earthly life.

When Fra Angelico was between fifty and sixty years of age, the command of the Pope drew him from his quiet retreat to the busy crowded city of Rome, where some of his best work was done. During an interval which occurred between the election of two popes he left Rome for Orvieto, where, with the help of his pupil Benozzo Gozzoli, he began to decorate with life-sized figures the Cappella Nuova in the cathedral. His work here was never finished, for he was again summoned to Rome, where he died. Fra Angelico was buried in the church of Santa Maria Minerva, and Pope Nicholas himself wrote his epitaph.

CHAPTER VII

BENOZZO GOZZOLI

(1420–1496)

Fra Angelico had one distinguished pupil, Benozzo di Lese di Sandro, called Benozzo Gozzoli. He is not so well known and so popular as his master, but was a conscientious worker, a devout, pious man, and his devotional pictures are equally animated by religious feeling. There is, however, this important difference—the pupil, living in the world and taking as his models the men, women, children, and animals he saw around him, had more real sympathy with humanity, a truer insight into nature than the monk who painted in his cloister with his mind fixed on heaven.

We know little of the life of this artist. When still very young he went with Fra Angelico to Rome and to Orvieto, and when his master died the pupil begged to be allowed to complete his unfinished work in the cathedral. This request was refused, so Benozzo retired to Montefalco, a little town not far from Assisi, but on the opposite side of the valley, where he was employed to decorate the church of San Francesco. In the choir he

Brogi, Florence

PORTRAIT OF BENOZZO GOZZOLI, BY HIMSELF

Detail from the Frescoes in the Riccardi Palace (Procession of the Three Kings), Florence

painted scenes from the life of St. Francis, with many interesting portraits, and, in the right aisle, the Crucifixion, Christ blessing His people, the Madonna with saints, and the four Latin fathers of the Church, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory. The Latin fathers appear constantly in Italian pictures, and as few people know their histories or can readily distinguish between them, their stories are given at some length in the course of these pages.

St. Jerome was the son of a rich man who dwelt in a city of Dalmatia on the eastern shore of the Adriatic. He was bred to the law, and became while still young a most eloquent speaker. When little more than thirty years of age he forsook the world, and retired to the desert of Arabia, where for four years he supported himself with the work of his own hands. Though he suffered much from thirst, hunger, and from the burning sun, he translated into Latin the Old and the New Testaments. Often while in that dreary abode strange visions tempted him, and in his frenzy he collected together flints and pieces of rock which he threw at the crucifix. Then coming to himself he was seized with remorse, and with the same stones tore and beat his breast in an agony of repentance. On his return to Rome he preached fervently against luxury and vice, making many converts, especially among the noble Roman ladies. In his old age St. Jerome retired to a monastery that he had founded at Bethlehem, and here he died. In the picture you see the outside of the monastery, and St. Jerome,

made bold by faith, taking the thorn from the paw of a lion, while two of his three companions fly in terror. The grateful lion never forsook his benefactor, and in numerous pictures of the saint, whether in the desert or in his study, the lion, like a faithful dog, guards his master. It does not seem likely that Benozzo could ever have seen a lion, though many wild beasts were kept as curiosities by princes and rich citizens. If he had he would hardly have made him so small compared with the saint, or with an almost human face, like the British lion in the comic papers. St. Jerome sometimes wears the scarlet hat and robe of a cardinal, which is a mistake of the painter, for there were no cardinals till long after his time. More frequently he appears as a half-starved naked hermit—

> "Knocking at his poor old breast
> With his great round stone to subdue the flesh."
> —R. Browning.

In Venetian pictures, besides the lion, a partridge daintily steps across the floor, as in the picture by Catena in the National Gallery: and German artists when they wished to suggest a wilderness added quite a menagerie of animals. The friendship of St. Jerome and the Lion was symbolical of a time of peace when all dwellers on earth should live together in unity.

Benozzo worked for seven years at Montefalco, but at last came an opportunity for him to distinguish himself.

Alinari, Florence

ST. JEROME AND THE LION

Church of S. Francesco, Montefalco

Benozzo Gozzoli

Alinari, Florence

PORTRAIT OF LORENZO DE' MEDICI

Detail from the Frescoes in the Riccardi Palace (Procession of the Three Kings), Florence

Benozzo Gozzoli

BENOZZO GOZZOLI

In the year 1457 there was no very important artist at work in Florence; two were lately dead, and a third, Fra Filippo Lippi, was absent. Piero de' Medici the First, then the head of the great house of merchants and bankers who gave queens to France and popes to Rome, was in need of some one to decorate the private chapel of his new palace. Benozzo was sent for, and in a small dark chamber, where the light of day can hardly penetrate, he painted a magnificent procession, the Three Kings on their way to and from Bethlehem. Every portion of this crowded composition has the finish of a miniature and glows with gold and colour. The train of men, dogs and horses winds down through a rocky landscape, each man pressing on his fellow in his haste to arrive sooner at the goal. Here is the portly ecclesiastic on a sleek mule, the negro slave, the artist himself with his name painted on his cap, and, conspicuous for their beauty of person and gorgeous attire, Michele Paleollogo, the last emperor of Constantinople, and Lorenzo de' Medici, on richly caparisoned horses. Behind them Cosimo the First and Piero de' Medici, the father and grandfather of Lorenzo. In the background, a huntsman with two dogs chases a large deer, while servants carrying falcons and hunting leopards mix among the crowd.

On either side the now vacant space over the altar is the garden of heaven, very much as Fra Angelico had imagined it, but with the wider view of one who lived in freer air. Here are kneeling angels clad in bright raiment, their heads crowned

with golden halos, their wings glowing with burning spots of colour like tropical butterflies. Others wander in sweet converse or play among the flowers. Above the tall tree-tops groups of angels look down from where they lie extended on the clouds, with feet in air and hands upraised, like the merry ragged urchins on the walls of a hill-town. Further back still, with outstretched pinions, crowds of these heavenly visitors swoop down like swallows, all intent on the same object, to see and to adore the Infant Christ. It is difficult to imagine anything more fascinating, for each minute portion of the large composition has the exquisite finish of an illuminated manuscript. In altering a staircase, a door has been cut right through the procession; but what is most astonishing is that the room is now so dark that an electric lamp is necessary to see the frescoes. No one therefore knows how the artist managed to paint them.

About thirty miles from Florence is the picturesque little town of St. Gimignano, whose towers crown an olive-clad hill. It possesses an interesting Palazzo Pubblico (city hall) and a small cathedral, the inside of which is decorated with quaint frescoes by artists from Siena.

At present, however, we will not visit the cathedral, but take our way to the church of St. Agostino (St. Augustine), which contains seventeen frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli; scenes from the life of St. Augustine. The one chosen for an illustration is not considered to be the best, but is the most

interesting, for here is a picture of schoolboy life at Florence in the fifteenth century, and you may imagine Sandro Botticelli or any other artist of whom we hear that he played truant from his work, being dragged by his indignant parents before some such formidable schoolmaster.

St. Augustine, like St. Jerome, was at first a lawyer, and was distinguished for his eloquence. His father was a heathen, and he himself led a wild irregular life, in spite of the prayers and example of his mother St. Monica, a devout Christian woman. At length, being at Milan, he was induced to listen to the preaching of St. Ambrose, was converted and was ordained as a priest. He became Bishop of Hippo, a small town near Carthage, where he remained for the rest of his life, writing, preaching, and working among his people. And here, during the terrible siege of the city by the Vandals, he died, having refused to desert his flock.

The scene of the present story is a handsome street, and the persons present are divided into two groups, each of which contains a separate incident. In the first is St. Monica, who is placing her little son under the care of a pompous schoolmaster. In the other, the same schoolmaster is birching a little chubby boy raised for the purpose on the back of a bigger companion. One small urchin, peeping round a pillar, looks at the scene with interest not unmixed by foreboding, but St. Augustine, who stands by his master's side, never raises his eyes from his task. The short full tunics worn by the boys, the peculiar head-dress of the master, is not

the Roman dress at the time of St. Augustine, but that of the substantial Florentine citizen of the fifteenth century. Notice what a charming border there is on either side of the picture, and the cupids and foliage sculptured on the porch behind St. Monica. The artists of the Italian Renaissance delighted in that style of decoration, and it is carried to perfection in the celebrated Raphael cartoons, now preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Benozzo's most important works are the frescoes in the Campo Santo at Pisa, where for sixteen years, through fair and foul weather, he laboured industriously, covering the bare cloister walls with pictures from the Bible. The cloisters of the Campo Santo were, as you may remember, designed by Giovanni Pisano; when Benozzo Gozzoli began to paint they were not yet finished, and the plaster walls were still wet and bare. He was at this time past middle life, but set to work with the energy of youth to paint a series of twenty-four frescoes, beginning with Noah and his ark, and ending with the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon. They are now in very bad condition, and two have perished entirely. Enough, however, still remains to prove not only the industry of the painter, but the fertility of his imagination; for these vast compositions are crowded with animal life of all kinds. His Bible characters wear Florentine costumes, and many of them are portraits. The naïve imagination of the early painters saw nothing incongruous in representing the chief members of the Medici family looking

Alinari, Florence

ST. AUGUSTINE AT SCHOOL

Fresco from the Church of S. Agostino, San Gemignano

Benozzo Gozzoli

Alinari, Florence

PARADISE

Detail from the Frescoes in the Riccardi Palace (Procession of the Three Kings), Florence

Benozzo Gozzoli

on with interest at the building of the Tower of Babel.

Benozzo was an old man when he completed this work, and the Pisans, to show their gratitude, erected for him a tomb in the cloister where he had laboured so long.

CHAPTER VIII

LORENZO GHIBERTI

(1375–1455)

You heard in a previous chapter that Andrea Pisano made the bronze doors for the Baptistery of S. Giovanni in Florence. In the year 1400 the governor of the city agreed that for its further adornment two other pair of bronze doors should be made, and, in order to secure the finest work, invited all the most noted artists in Tuscany to enter into a competition. This method of securing for themselves the work of the best living artist was not a new idea. The Greeks frequently resorted to it, and the many beautiful statues of Amazons, which you must often have seen, are all supposed to be copies of four Amazons made for a competition in the fifth century B.C.

In the competition for the bronze doors, held in Florence, tables of bronze were given to each of the seven competitors, who at the end of a year came up for trial, each bringing his completed work; Jacopo della Quercia of Siena, of whom we have lately heard, being of the number.

There was living at that time in Florence a certain Bartolo, a goldsmith of some reputation,

Alinari, Florence

THE ANGELS APPEARING TO ABRAHAM, AND THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

Panel from the East Doors of the Baptistery of S. Giovanni, Florence

Lorenzo Ghiberti

who had married a widow, Madonna Fiore. She had one son, Lorenzo Ghiberti, whom Bartolo loved as if he had been his own child; and carefully instructed him in designing, drawing, and all goldsmith's art. Lorenzo Ghiberti, while still a very young man, left Florence, where the plague was then raging, and found employment with Carlo Malatesta at Rimini. On the announcement of the competition Bartolo sent for his stepson, and so wisely did he advise and assist him, making him constantly recast and improve upon the original design, that when judgment was delivered, all, without exception, gave their vote in favour of Ghiberti; Filippo Brunelleschi, another Florentine whose work was regarded with much favour, generously giving his vote also to his younger rival. The subject chosen for the competition was the sacrifice of Isaac by his father Abraham, and the work of the rival sculptors may still be compared in the Bargello, where the original reliefs hang side by side.

The story of Isaac is a familiar one, and many people have been shocked to think that a father could thus deliberately attempt the life of his own son. It must, however, be remembered that it was not done in mere wanton cruelty. The idea of honouring or of appeasing an offended deity is common to all primitive nations, and a sacrifice to be of any value must not only be without blemish, but also the best-loved possession of its owner. One of the oldest known examples of alphabetic writing, which belongs to the time of Ahab, King of Israel, records a similar sacrifice, when Mesha, King of Moab, hard pressed

by the armies of Israel and Judah, offered up in sacrifice his eldest son. Agamemnon, the commander-in-chief of the Greek expedition against Troy, was forced by the other princes to give his daughter Iphigenia to appease the anger of Artemis, who had kept their fleet windbound in Aulis. History abounds in examples of this kind.

In the making of these doors Ghiberti was assisted by many other less important sculptors, his stepfather in particular still constantly aiding and advising him. Even so, it was twenty-five years before they were completed. Hardly were they finished than he received orders to make another pair, which were to occupy the place of honour opposite the cathedral: his first pair and those of Andrea Pisano being placed on the north and south sides. In Ghiberti's first gates he had followed the example of Andrea, each separate scene being enclosed in a lozenge, and executed in high relief: that is, standing well out from the background, so that it might appear to be detached from it.

In the second pair he adopted a new style, and one entirely his own. These doors, which were afterwards gilded, had so fine an effect that the great sculptor, Michael Angelo, standing in front of them, is said to have exclaimed: "They are so beautiful that they might well be the gates of Paradise." Each one of them contains five scenes or pictures in very low relief, and so cleverly has the perspective been arranged that you seem to see long distances over a wide landscape, an effect which, though common enough in painting, had never before been produced

Alinari, Florence

BRONZE RELIEF FROM THE TOMB OF SAN ZENOBIUS

Cathedral St. Maria del Fiore, Florence

Lorenzo Ghiberti

in metal. On either side of each row of pictures were small statues and portrait busts, among the last the likenesses of the artist and his stepfather; and all round on the outside is a most beautiful border, where animals and birds are playing among flowers and foliage. Ghiberti was seventy-four years old when these last gates were finished, his labours on the Baptistery having lasted more than half a century. During that time he had executed many other commissions; among them some fine pieces of goldsmith's work, the mitres for Pope Martin V. and Pope Eugenius IV.; on the last of which blazed jewels to the value of 38,000 florins. One of his most important pieces of sculpture, executed in the same pictorial manner as the golden gates, is the sepulchre of St. Zenobius, in the duomo of his native city.

St. Zenobius, one of the first Florentine bishops, plays an important part in her art as a favourite subject both for sculpture and painting. Born of heathen parents, he was early converted to Christianity, and was distinguished for his piety and eloquence. Unlike St. Petronius of Bologna, whose sole claim to the honour of his fellow-citizens rested on his determined resistance to the Arian Christians who dissented from him in certain articles of belief, St. Zenobius lived in love and peace with every one. On one occasion by his prayers he restored life to a messenger who, coming with gifts from St. Ambrose at Milan, had fallen over a precipice by the way. Another time a child, a stranger in the city, separated from his mother in the crowd, was crushed under a bullock waggon. His mother, weeping, laid

the little body at the feet of the saint, whereat the child's soul came back to him, and he arose and stood on his feet. Another child, that of a French lady who had gone on a pilgrimage to Rome, was also restored to life by the intercession of the good bishop. Five years after his death his bones were conveyed in solemn procession to their place under the high altar of the cathedral. On the way the people, pressing round, overthrew the bearers, and the coffin was thrown against an ancient elm, which then stood on the cathedral square. At the touch of the sacred relics the withered tree burst forth into flower and blossom. A column was afterwards erected to mark the spot, to which, at one time, it was the custom to attach a green bough at the festival of the saint. The good deeds of St. Zenobius are still remembered by the people of Florence, and at Whitsuntide, when roses deck the hedges and the rose-heaped stalls of the market-women glow crimson against the grey walls of the ancient palaces, the festival of blessing the roses is still held in Santa Maria del Fiore. Crowds of peasants throng before the silver shrine, while dark-eyed chorister boys receive in their arms masses of scented blossoms, which, after being laid against the golden head of the saint, are given back to his devout worshippers.

CHAPTER IX

FILIPPO BRUNELLESCHI

(1377–1444)

Filippo Brunelleschi, the generous rival of Ghiberti, was a distinguished architect, and his ambition chiefly centred itself in a determination to erect on the cathedral at Florence a large central dome or cupola, as had been designed in the original plan of Arnolfo. For this purpose, after his rejection by the Signoria in the competition for the gates, he went to Rome, accompanied by his young friend Donatello, afterwards a famous sculptor. The two wandered about together drawing, studying, and collecting antiquities, and when funds were low Brunelleschi obtained employment as a goldsmith. He took particular pains to understand the construction of all the domed buildings in that city, and returned to Florence fully prepared with a plan.

Many stormy meetings took place at the council, for every one had some opinion to deliver on the subject, and those who knew the least talked the most. At length Brunelleschi, who had been driven out and treated as a fool when he first proposed his scheme, was recalled, and, taking an egg in his

hand, he asked who could make it stand upright. Many tried, but in vain. Then Brunelleschi lightly tapped one end against the table, and behold the egg stood upright. That is easy enough, they cried out together. "Yes," he replied, "when you know how to do it. So it is with my cupola." The commission was granted, but Lorenzo Ghiberti, now a person of great importance, was associated with him. As far as one can judge from contemporary records Ghiberti did not behave well on this occasion. He did not understand in the least how the work was to be done, yet he drew half the salary, and hindered and hampered his partner in every possible way. At length Brunelleschi, irritated beyond all bearing, bethought himself of a way out of the difficulty. He feigned illness and took to his bed. Ghiberti was then forced to acknowledge his incompetence and to send in his resignation, upon which the invalid made a rapid and satisfactory recovery.

It would be too hard for me to explain how Filippo constructed this great dome, and harder still for you to understand; perhaps it will be sufficient to tell you that it was double, with a space between the two vaults, eight-sided, and supported with buttresses. On the summit was a lantern. Outside the cupola were eight ribs of marble, and a marble channel to carry the rain. Besides the great dome of the cathedral Brunelleschi vaulted over in the same manner several smaller buildings, he also designed the church and sacristy of San Lorenzo. He it was who devised the

machinery for the Paradiso represented at the festival of the Assumption. This was a kind of tableau, where the canopy of heaven was represented by blue star-spangled draperies, the clouds by masses of cotton wool. The Virgin occupied the centre, surrounded by children attired as angels, wearing gilt wings, who were attached to brackets. The whole was lighted with small lamps, and the movements of the angels contrived by means of a concealed windlass and pulleys like the fairy transformation scene in a modern pantomime.

Vasari tells us many anecdotes of Brunelleschi, particularly about the pleasant familiarity which existed between him and Donatello. On one occasion the latter informed his friend that he had seen at Cortona a beautiful antique marble vase. Brunelleschi was so excited by his description that he set off and walked, then and there, to Cortona, where he made a drawing of it, and returned to Florence before his friend knew that he had started. On another occasion Donatello made a crucifix of which he was exceedingly proud, but Brunelleschi, after looking at it attentively, remarked that it was not the Saviour of men who hung there, but a rude peasant. Donatello, annoyed by this criticism, said, "Take wood then, and make one thyself," but Brunelleschi, who was never out of temper, did not reply. Some time later it was arranged that they should dine together at Brunelleschi's house, and Donatello was sent on ahead carrying the eggs and vegetables and cheese that they had bought in the market. On entering his friend's room his eye at

once encountered a crucifix like his own in every particular, but so far superior there was no comparison between them. In his astonishment Donatello let go the corner of his apron, and eggs, salad, and cheese rolled in confusion on the floor. "What hast thou been about, Donato, and what dost thou mean us to have for dinner," said Filippo, laughing. "I for my part," replied Donatello, "have had my share of dinner for to-day; if thou must needs have some, take it, for to thee it has been given to represent the Christ, to me boors only."

CHAPTER X

DONATELLO

(1356–1468)

Donato, or Donatello, the loving diminutive usually bestowed on him by his friends, was by birth a peasant, and though he enjoyed all his life the company and patronage of the great, never became a courtier or altered his simple habit of dress and living. He was brought up in the house of a banker, Ruperto Martelli, and early displayed unusual talent. It is told of him that on one occasion Cosimo de' Medici, dissatisfied with his shabby attire, which must have had a strange effect in such gorgeous surroundings, sent him a suit of new clothes for a festival, but Donatello, after wearing them on one or two occasions, returned them, saying that such attire was too dainty for him.

It is in Santa Croce, that vast brick pile which looks on the outside like a barn or factory, that we shall find one of the first successful efforts of the young artist. You will remember that in Santa Croce are the Bardi and Peruzzi chapels painted by Giotto, and there too are other chapels painted by artists of the same school, Taddeo Gaddi, Giotto's favourite pupil, Agnolo Gaddi, and Giovanni

di Milano. The first impression made by this church is disappointing; its flat ceiling and columns, and, above all, the drab hue with which it is painted, are most depressing. In time, however, you will learn to appreciate its vast proportions, especially should you go there in the morning when the sun is streaming in through the painted windows. Remember, as a golden rule in Italy, always visit churches in the morning. They are usually closed between twelve and three, and if, as is often the case, you put off going till the late afternoon, you might just as well stay at home, for you will see nothing to any purpose.

On either side of the walls are arranged monuments of great Florentines. Some of these, like the exquisite recumbent figures of Leonardo Bruni and Carlo Marsuppini, are by artists of the Donatello school, others are modern, though put up in memory of persons who have long been dead. On the right-hand side you will find the "Annunciation" by Donatello, and even if you had not come on purpose to look for it, it must have attracted your attention. It is of an unusual colour, grey sandstone, lightly picked out with gold, and round the central figure of the Madonna and the angel is a flowery border. Everything about it is exquisitely delicate, graceful, and refined; the boy's pure soul shines out through his work.

For the guild of the armourers Donatello made a statue of St. George, which formerly stood in a niche outside Or' San Michele, but has now for greater safety been placed in the Bargello, where a

whole room has been devoted to the works of this popular master. Some of these are casts only, as the great equestrian statue of the condottiere Erasmo da Narni, called Gattamelata, the original bronze being at Padua. Donatello executed many works in that city, and the Paduans were most anxious to persuade him to settle down among them. In the Palazzo della Ragione, at Padua, there is a huge wooden model of a horse, supposed to be that of Donatello, which was on one occasion used in a procession, and carried a figure of Zeus seated on a lion skin. This was the first great equestrian statue that had been made since classical times, and in the construction of it the sculptor was influenced by the celebrated horses on St. Mark's at Venice.

The condottieri generals play a very important part in Italian history during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. They were the leaders of mercenaries who sold their services to any one who chose to employ them, fighting sometimes on one side and sometimes on the other. Often they were men of low estate like Jacopo Sforza, who was digging in a field when he was persuaded to throw away his spade and join the armies of Milan. His son married a daughter of the last Visconti, and thus the descendants of the peasant became dukes of Milan. Some were hereditary princes of small provinces, like Duke Guido da Montefeltro of Urbino, whose portrait, with that of his wife, by Piero della Francesca, hangs in the Uffizi. He lost one eye and had his nose broken in a tournament;

all his portraits therefore are always taken in profile. In spite of his murderous profession he was an excellent ruler to his own subjects, exempted them from taxation, and spent among them the money he earned in the wars.

By this digression on the condottieri we have wandered from the statue of St. George. It is said that Michael Angelo, standing in front of this statue, said to it, "*cammina*" (Walk), a tribute to the excellence of the sculptor, who had made it appear as if alive and ready to advance against his enemies. Below the statue was a relief on which was represented St. George killing the dragon.

St. George is the Red Cross knight described in the first canto of Spenser's "Faërie Queene."

> "A gentle knight was pricking on the plaine,
> Ycladd in mightie armes and silver shielde,
> Wherin old dints of deepe woundes did remaine,
> The cruel markes of many a bloody field.
>
> And on his brest a bloody cross he bore,
> The dear remembrance of his dying Lord,
> For whose sweete sake that glorious badge he wore,
> And dead, as living, ever him adored."

The story of St. George and the dragon is one of the old-world fairy tales; and not only in England, where he is the patron saint, but everywhere that English is spoken he will remain the type of all that is good and noblest in man. Strong with the weapons of honour, courage, and chastity, he was ready at all times to succour the oppressed. Every mother who teaches her son to resist temptation; not

to use his strength against the weak; and to give his own life if need be to protect women and children, is really setting before him the example of St. George. It is well indeed for all Englishmen that they have so noble a patron saint, and even though they may not think about it or understand the reason why, they act up to his example. To give one instance only of this self-sacrifice and devotion to duty, there is the story of the wreck of the *Birkenhead*, where the troops at the command of their officers drawn up in order on the deck awaited death silently, while the women and children were put into the boats. This is not the case in every shipwreck or great catastrophe, where it often happens that the strong trampled down the weak and fought together, each seeking only to save his own life.

The mediæval story of St. George describes him as a Roman tribune in the time of Diocletian, about three hundred years after Christ. Travelling in Libya he came to a city where the inhabitants were forced daily to provide a meal of human flesh for a horrible dragon. The lot had fallen on the king's daughter, Cleolinda, or Sabina as she is also called, and even her royal father could not save her. St. George went out against the dragon, pinned him to the earth with his spear, and bound him with the girdle of the princess. The inhabitants were so much impressed by this miracle that they were converted to Christianity—twenty thousand in a day. The pagan emperor was furious, and ordered St. George to be tortured in every possible way. He was burned, torn with nails, broken on a wheel, but

nothing could shake his constancy, so he was finally beheaded. His festival on April 22 is still observed, when red roses are worn in his honour. There are several other warrior saints, St. William, St. Maurice, and St. Liberale, but these are only honoured in special places. To distinguish between St. George and St. Michael is sometimes difficult, for the latter tramples down Satan in the form of a dragon. St. George may be known by his horse, while the archangel Michael soars aloft on wings. St. Michael also, as the angel of judgment, frequently carries the scales in which he weighs the souls of the dead.

Donatello made two statues of David with the head of Goliath, and one of Judith with the head of Holofernes. The story of David is too well known to require repetition; that of Judith is told later in describing a picture by Sandro Botticelli. The latter statue is not in itself either beautiful or important, but is interesting in relation to the history of the times when Florence and other Italian cities were endeavouring to throw off the yoke of the tyrants. It once stood in the garden of the Medici palace, but after the exile of Piero, the unworthy son of the great Lorenzo, it became public property, and was placed in the Loggia dei Lanzi, a sort of covered terrace opposite the Palazzo Vecchio. On its pedestal was engraved in Latin: "A wholesome example for the inhabitants of a free republic." Judith, the slayer of her people's enemy, occupies a place of honour with Marzocco, the much-loved lion of the republic. Marzocco is to be found everywhere in

Alinari, Florence

RELIEF IN MARBLE FROM THE TOMB OF BARTOLOMMEO ARAGAZZI, MONTEPULCIANO

Donatello

Alinari, Florence

ST. GEORGE

Formerly on the Church of the Or' San Michele, now in National Museum, Florence

Donatello

Florence, from the weathercock of the great tower to the hairpins of the women chattering round the fountain. The pedigree of Marzocco is long and honourable. His first home was in Lydia on the shores of the Mediterranean. An oracle announced to Meles, king of Lydia, that he should carry round the walls of his new city of Sardes the thing that had that day been born into his household, and behold it was a lion cub. The lion from that day became the emblem of the kings of Lydia, and when, as is supposed, a great emigration of these people took place to Europe, where they settled down in Italy under the name of Etruscans, they brought their lion standards with them. The Florentines continued to use the lion as their city arms, and Marzocco was for many centuries the war-cry of the city on the Arno.

In the little town of Montepulciano, famous for the excellence of its wine, Donatello erected a stupendous monument for Bartolommeo Aragazzi, secretary of Pope Martin V. Aragazzi was a native of Montepulciano, and thought by this means his memory would be preserved to all future generations. Leonardo Bruni, a celebrated lawyer, whose tomb in Santa Croce was erected by his admiring fellow-citizens after his death, writes thus: "No one who trusted to his own fame ever thought of erecting a monument to himself. What," he says, "can be more ignoble than to memorialise by a monument one whose life says nothing. Cyrus ordered his body to be laid in the earth, saying that no more noble material existed for its reception than

that which produced flowers, fruits, and precious things; so Cæsar and Alexander, being of the same opinion, took no pains to erect their own monuments." He then proceeds to tell his friends that, when travelling in the neighbourhood of Montepulciano, he encountered a train of bullock-carts carrying the marble blocks with which the monument was to be built up. The carts were stuck fast in the mud, and one of the drivers exclaimed in despair that he would that the curse of God might rest on all poets. "Why so?" said Bruni. "Because," said he, "a foolish puffed-up man, lately dead in Rome, had ordered the monument; people called him a poet, but he had never heard him called so in his lifetime." Alas for the vanity of human wishes! this monument, raised at so much trouble and expense, has been taken down, and only separate fragments remain to show its original beauty.

The same, but in this case undeserved, fate also befell another large and very beautiful composition by this sculptor. This is the high altar of the church of St. Anthony at Padua, where the story of the saint is told in a series of beautiful reliefs. This St. Anthony is not the hermit companion of St. Paul, who is so frequently represented with a bell which he rang to frighten away demons, but a more modern saint, the disciple and friend of St. Francis of Assisi. An anecdote is related of him, that when the people would not come to listen to his preaching, he called the fishes, and they, putting up their heads out of the water,

gathered round to hear him as the birds listened to St. Francis.

One of Donatello's most beautiful reliefs is that of St. Cecilia, now in the possession of Lord Wemyss. Instead of being clothed in the rich habit, and with the elaborate head-dress of the period, the saint is here represented with the perfect simplicity of Greek sculpture. The plain gown leaves bare the long neck and sloping shoulders unadorned with jewels. Her hair, confined by a fillet, is loosely knotted and crowned with a diadem, in shape like the crescent moon. To the fair St. Cecilia of Donatello might be addressed the lines written by Dante to Beatrice in the "Vita Nuova"—

> "My lady looks so gentle and so pure
> When yielding salutation by the way
> That the tongue trembles and has nought to say,
> And the eyes that fain would see may not endure,
> And still amid the praise she hears secure;
> She walks with humbleness for her array,
> Seeming a creature sent from heaven to stay
> On earth, and show a miracle made sure."

Donatello and Luca della Robbia, a sculptor whose works are described in the next chapter, made two singing galleries for the cathedral in Florence. For these galleries you may look in vain in that vast and dreary space. They were torn down about three hundred years later to make room for temporary decorations at the time of a royal wedding. For many years they lay half buried in river mud in a warehouse on the bank of the Arno; but they have now been restored, and can be seen in the

Opera del Duomo, the little museum of the cathedral, which contains a few other priceless treasures—the silver altar of San Giovanni, and a certain marvellous piece of Byzantine mosaic brought from Constantinople. Here Donatello's works appear to great disadvantage, for no one knew better than he did that sculpture intended to be placed at a great height has an entirely different effect when seen on the same level. His own favourite statue, the *Zuccone* on Giotto's tower, is said to have been quite incomprehensible when seen in the studio. So it is with Donatello's gallery in its present position. The subject of Luca's frieze is the psalm, "Praise Him upon the lute and harp. Praise Him in the cymbals and dances," and on each panel are groups of figures, youths, maidens, and children playing on different instruments. They are all exquisite pieces of humanity, with dimpled limbs, sweet faces, and graceful gestures. Even in the ecstasy of their joy their movement has that restraint which is characteristic of the best art, either in sculpture or painting.

Donatello's children are superhuman, a brood of young giants; half-fledged wings grow from their broad shoulders; their immature limbs, with enormously developed muscles, look coarse and heavy, their faces terrible. You would not care to go and play with those children, they look as if they would tear you to pieces in their turbulent revelry. This is not the case with his other groups of children, such as the lovely winged boys on the pulpit outside the cathedral at Prato, and he is celebrated for his

Alinari, Florence

PULPIT OUTSIDE THE CATHEDRAL, PRATO

use of *putti* (cherubs) in decoration. Still he is not, as has been stated, the first artist who thus employed them, for cupids play among the foliage of Pope Benedict's tomb at Perugia, and weeping children hold up the heavy garlands round that of Ilaria del Caretto at Lucca.

When Donatello was old he became very infirm, and Cosimo de' Medici, who was much attached to him, on his deathbed confided him to the care of his son Piero. The latter fulfilled his father's injunctions by bestowing upon the sculptor a farm, and he went off joyfully to take possession. Before the end of the year Donatello came back, much cast down, bringing back the title-deeds, which he returned to Piero, saying that he would rather die of hunger than of worry, for that on a farm something untoward was always taking place. Piero laughed, and gave him instead an annual sum of money, but so little did he care for gain, that he kept all the coin he had in a basket, which he let down from the ceiling with a string, and lent to whoever asked him. Donatello was eighty-two years of age when he died, having lived for some years bedridden in his own hired house. In spite of the urgent demand of his relations, that he would settle on them his small landed property, he left it to the honest peasant who had managed it for him for many years. Donatello had many distinguished pupils. They designed beautiful tombs, made portraits, busts, and excelled in a form of flattened relief called *stiacciato*.

CHAPTER XI

LUCA DELLA ROBBIA

(1400–1483)

In the year 1400 was born in Florence Luca della Robbia, the first and most important member of a new school of sculptors who flourished throughout the whole century. Their works, executed in terra-cotta, over which was spread a hard enamel glaze, were largely used for decorating private houses, churches, cloisters, and the outside walls of buildings which from being exposed to damp were unsuitable for fresco. The composition of this glaze, invented or at any rate perfected by Luca, was a jealously guarded secret among these artists, most of whom were members of the same family.

This glaze, though brittle, is otherwise indestructible, for the colours never fade, so that many reliefs, medallions, and other decorative works still remain as fresh after the lapse of nearly five centuries as if they had only been finished yesterday. Though all possess this quality of durability they differ very much in beauty of colour and design, and many ignorantly ascribed to Luca are really inferior work of the third generation. These latter artists produced highly effective decorations with

Alinari, Florence

MADONNA AND CHILD

National Museum, Florence

Della Robbia

the most brilliant combination of colours, but they have a gaudy vulgar appearance when compared with the exquisite delicacy and refinement of the works of Luca, and his favourite nephew Andrea.

These two sculptors, both deeply religious men, restricted themselves almost entirely to devotional subjects, which they executed either in pure white or white with a background of the tenderest, most ethereal blue, the colour of the Virgin Mary, to whose service they were especially devoted. They worked much together, and Andrea often used his uncle's designs, so that it is not easy to distinguish between them. Like almost all other artists of the time, Luca was educated as a goldsmith, but early devoted himself to drawing and sculpture, and, having no time for exercise, used to sit with his cold feet in a basket of shavings. Very little is known about his life, though he was eighty-one years old when he died; but on account of his well-known piety, he was liberally patronised by the clergy, and for more than twenty years was employed in decorating the cathedral at Florence, called Madonna del Fiore from the lily or iris blossom which is the symbol of the city. For the cathedral also, when about thirty-one years of age, he executed his first important piece of work, one of the two beautiful organ galleries sculptured in marble; the other, as we have heard, is by Donatello.

Besides the organ gallery, Luca also made the bronze doors of the sacristy, which were decorated in panels with scenes from the life of Christ.

These bronze doors play an important part in an exciting event in Florentine history. At the time when Lorenzo de' Medici ruled in Florence a plot was formed, called from the name of its leaders the Pazzi conspiracy. Its object was to assassinate Lorenzo de' Medici and his brother Giuliano during a public celebration of Mass in the cathedral. This horrible scheme was successful so far as concerned Giuliano, who at the tinkling of the Mass bell was attacked by the assassins, and fell stabbed through and through with nineteen wounds. Lorenzo was more fortunate, the first knife-stroke missed its aim, a faithful friend who stood near him threw himself into the breach, and Lorenzo fled for his life, and his adherents closed the heavy bronze doors in the face of the pursuers. It would take too long to tell how Lorenzo escaped, and what punishment was inflicted on the murderers, but of the Pazzi conspirators we shall hear again in the story of Sandro Botticelli.

The name of Luca della Robbia is again associated with the Pazzi family, from the decoration he made for their chapel at Santa Croce, round whose domed ceiling is a series of medallions of the prophets and evangelists. Luca was the inventor of a particular style of decoration, which consisted of a circular frame representing heavy foliage in the centre of which might be a relief, an inscription, or a coat of arms. The novelty and effectiveness of these "tondi," as they were called, set the fashion for round paintings enclosed in heavy carved frames. These frames adopted by Fra Filippo Lippi became

very popular with Florentine artists of the fifteenth century.

In the Bargello, where you may remember is Giotto's fresco of Dante, are several rooms filled with the works of the della Robbia artists torn down from wayside shrines and private houses. They lose all historical interest in thus being removed from their original stations, and also much of their individual charm. These smiling Madonnas and dimpled children, all so much like each other in their dainty refinement, are like flowers, each one of which, perfect in itself, loses its individual charm when crowded together in a show. Rather would I take you to see some of his works that have not been so well taken care of. There is one on the cathedral at Prato, Madonna della Cintola she is called; that is, Our Lady of the Girdle. It is said that she is a likeness of his cousin, a certain Mariotta, a peasant girl of Prato, whom the young sculptor often saw standing in her ragged kirtle and green bodice in the bright sunshine of the market-place. He loved her, but loved in vain; and when after a time he came back to Prato, Mariotta was married, and there, at the door of her own house, she stood, holding in her arms a sturdy babe. Now Mariotta and her babe, clad in blue and silver, may be seen by all who, before going to see the frescoes of Filippo Lippi in the choir, pause a moment to look at the Madonna, with St. Lawrence and St. Stephen over the great doorway.

In the cloister of the Foundling Hospital at

Florence is an exquisite Annunciation by Luca; while over the colonnade in front of the building are blue medallions, on each of which is the sweetest of babies, with its fair head, dimpled arms, and shoulders rising out of the swaddling-bands which envelop its lower limbs. These, it is said, are the work of Andrea, but, as he alone of all the della Robbia was most truly in sympathy with Luca, it matters little whether uncle or nephew did the work.

Just outside the walls of Siena, in the chapel of the Franciscan monastery of the Osservanza, there is a very fine example of della Robbia work by either Luca or Andrea. In the centre kneels the Virgin, and receives a crown from her divine Son. Below are St. John, St. Francis, St. Catherine, and St. Bernardino of Siena, the last of whom rests one hand on the head of the lady, the giver of the altar-piece, who kneels gazing fervently towards heaven. The stories of St. Bernardino and St. Catherine are too long to tell here, but both belong especially to Siena. The former, who was early left an orphan, when only seventeen years old joined a brotherhood of mercy. These brotherhoods, whose duty is to nurse the sick, care for the poor, and bury the dead, formed a very conspicuous feature in the life of the Middle Ages, when death and pestilence were always abroad. Among the most noble in the land there were always some who from time to time forsook a life of pleasure in order to perform the most menial offices for the sick and poor. Even now in many

Alinari, Florence

MEDALLION OF INFANT

Spedale degli Innocenti (Children's Foundling Hospital)

Luca della Robbia

towns in Italy you may be startled by the sight of a gloomy procession bearing a corpse to the grave, or the victim of an accident to the nearest hospital, and instead of the creaking tread and stalwart, familiar forms of the blue-coated policemen, the bearers are strange, black-robed figures, whose heads and faces are entirely hidden by a black hood drawn down to the chin, through which dark eyes gleam mysteriously. It is said that St. Bernardino was the first to institute the *Monte di Pièta*, or public pawnshop, and that he did it to help the starving people to exchange their needless luxuries for money to purchase the real necessities of life.

St. Catherine of Siena was one of twenty-five children. Her father, a tanner, lived in what is still the tanners' quarter of the town. The smell of the dressed skins is not a pleasant one, but is undoubtedly wholesome; for when the plague visited Siena this district alone escaped. There they still show the house she lived in, the rooms of which are now turned into chapels. As a child she was not taught even to read or write, yet she learned both, and led a life of absolute unselfishness, for her one thought was to help those about her. She played an important part in the distracted politics of the time, made peace between Siena and Florence, and between Florence and the Pope, whom she brought back from his exile at Avignon. Her personal influence was very great, and was always exercised for good. A certain Nicola Tuldo of Perugia had been condemned to death for treason,

and mad with rage and despair refused all consolations of religion, preferring rather to curse God and die. St. Catherine came to him and so wrought on his feelings with her tears and prayers, that his hard heart melted and became like that of a little child. At the place of execution she stood near him, and as the bleeding head sullied her white robe in its fall, she saw in a vision his soul ascend to heaven.

At Pistoja, celebrated for the many interesting sculptures by Comacene artists, there is a hospital whose façade or front is richly decorated with reliefs and medallions by late artists of the della Robbia school. The subjects of the reliefs are the Deeds of Mercy: nursing the sick, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, burying the dead. They are very highly coloured, and more resemble painting than sculpture.

Alinari, Florence

DEEDS OF MERCY

Detail of the Frieze of the Ospedale del Ceppo, Pistoia

Giovanni, Luca, Girolamo della Robbia

CHAPTER XII

FRA FILIPPO LIPPI

(1412–1469)

"I am poor brother Lippo by your leave.
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so;
For me, I think, I speak as I was taught.
I always see the garden and God there a-making man's wife
The value and significance of flesh,
I can't unmake the minute afterward."

—Robert Browning.

Many are the anecdotes related about "poor brother Lippo," the gay, happy-go-lucky painter whom cruel fate compelled to adopt the monk's robe and cowl which suited him so ill. It came about in this fashion: as Robert Browning, in his poem, makes him tell his own story—

"I was a baby when my mother died,
And father died and left me in the street;
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
On fig skins, melon paring rinds, and shucks,
Refuse and rubbish."

Then the old aunt, who had done what little was in her power for the orphan child, took him to the Carmelite convent, and a fat friar, who had just

finished a good dinner, gave him the first good meal that he had enjoyed for months.

Filippo renounced the pomps and vanities of the world and became a monk. He cared little for books, and was always to be found gazing in wide-eyed admiration on the unfinished frescoes in a chapel which was part of the convent church, where two painters, Masaccio and Masolino (big Tom and little Tom), had painted Eve giving the apple to Adam, the expulsion from Paradise, and other Bible stories.

The good monks encouraged his taste for drawing. They would have preferred that he should have painted Madonnas in the fashion of the blessed Angelico, but at any rate it was an advantage to possess an artist of their own, who would decorate their church and bring money to the monastery. So little Filippo drew everything he saw—the prior and the sacristan, the people who came to church, the murderer who took sanctuary at the altar, and his accuser, who dared not touch him in that sacred place, though he vowed vengeance with many grimaces and gesticulations. He drew the peasant women with their babies for the Madonna, and for his angels the little children who played on the church steps.

There is a tradition that when Filippo was still quite a young man he was stolen by pirates from the seashore at Ancona, and sold for a slave in Barbary. One day he drew a portrait, in charcoal, of his master, a Moor; and the latter was so delighted that he gave him his freedom. At

Detail from the Coronation of the Virgin.

Accademia di Belle Arti Florence. *Filippo Lippi*

twenty-eight years of age he was back in Florence, painting a large altar-piece, now in the Accademia delle Belle Arti. This picture has three panels, of which part only of the one to the right of the spectator is given in the illustration—

> "A bowery, flowery, angel brood,
> Lilies and vestments and white faces."

In the left-hand panel is St. John the Baptist, clad in his raiment of camel's hair, and below is the painter himself, with a scroll, on which is written, "Is perfecit opus" (done entirely by himself). Opposite to St. John, on the other side, is St. Ambrose. In the centre the Virgin kneels at the feet of God the Father to receive her crown, and in front is a group of saints, a kneeling woman, and two little children.

St. Ambrose, the fiery bishop of Milan, is a worthy representative of the church militant. He was the first to assume to himself the spiritual power afterwards claimed by the bishops of Rome, and did not fear to brave the wrath of kings. From the steps of the cathedral at Milan he refused admission to Theodosius, the emperor of Rome, and denied to him the sacraments of the Church until he had done fitting penance for his sins.

Cosimo de' Medici, always a liberal patron of the Arts, employed Filippo to decorate his palace, but the work proceeded slowly. For Filippo was so great a lover of pleasure, and so neglectful of his duty, that his patron found it necessary to lock him into his studio. One night, attracted by the noise and footsteps in the street, Filippo made

a rope out of his bed-clothes, let himself down by the window, and, after a night of dissipation, was brought home in the morning by the city guards. If you had ever seen one of the grim Florentine palaces, with their ledgeless windows high above the stone-paved street, you would realise better the risk run by the painter for the sake of passing amusement.

With this disposition it is not to be wondered at that although Filippo obtained constant and well-paid employment, he was invariably short of money, and always begging to be paid for his pictures before they were finished; but his reputation in his own time could hardly be so bad as Vasari would have us believe, as he held several Church appointments. It is very difficult after this lapse of time to form a correct judgment, knowing the temptation to which he was exposed, to which his merry, easy-going temperament made him peculiarly susceptible. The worst crime he is known to have committed is that of refusing to pay to one of his pupils forty florins, which were owing to him, and then forging a receipt for the money. But of this last particular the only proof is his own confession extracted under torture.

By the time Filippo was a middle-aged man his love of pleasure, or, as he himself pleads, the cost of supporting six orphan nieces, had got him into so many debts and difficulties that he was forced to leave Florence for Prato, a small town about ten miles off. The Pieve, or church of St. Stephen, now the cathedral of Prato, possesses a priceless relic,

Alinari, Florence

PORTRAIT OF FILIPPO LIPPI, BY HIMSELF

Detail from the Fresco of the Burial of St. Stephen, Cathedral at Prato

the girdle of the Virgin, which the legend says was given by her to St. Thomas. It was brought from the Holy Land by a pious merchant, and once a year is still shown to the people from Donatello's pulpit, which clings like a swallow's nest on the outside wall of the cathedral.

Fra Filippo's frescoes in the cathedral at Prato are his finest work, and an interesting comparison may be made between them and Giotto's frescoes in Santa Croce, the subject in both cases being scenes from the life of St. John the Baptist. In Giotto's fresco, Salome, a stiff figure in heavy drapery, appears to have finished dancing, and to gaze with horror at the head which is being brought in. To the left, in a side chamber, she presents the head to her mother. Five other persons complete the central scene, a guest, a soldier, two attendants, and a single musician. Filippo's composition is far more elaborate. In the centre is the king with Herodias at his side, surrounded by a crowd of courtiers and attendants. The decisive moment has not yet been reached, several musicians still play vigorously, and the maiden, poised lightly on one foot, glides over the marble floor. She wears a floating upper garment of white transparent material, with graceful hanging sleeves; under this, as she dances, are seen glimpses of a close-fitting blue robe, and round her neck is a string of large pearls. To the right, facing the spectator, is a magnificent soldier, lance in hand; and behind, Salome, having gained her reward, goes out with an empty dish in her hands. On the left she presents the head to her mother, who

sits at a separate table. Courtiers press round to gaze at the ghastly spectacle, and the attendant maidens cling together in terror. Unfortunately this fresco has been so much injured by damp that no illustration would give you any real idea of its beauty. The frescoes on the right-hand side of the chapel represent events in the life of St. Stephen the deacon. In the other principal scene, the lamentation round the body of St. Stephen, there are many remarkable portraits, among whom are the painter himself, and his friend and fellow-worker, Fra Diamente.

The fame of Fra Filippo's work having reached the nuns of Santa Margherita, they desired that he should paint a Madonna for their convent chapel. This he undertook to do on condition that a certain beautiful novice should be his model. As Filippo was then fifty years old, and was supposed to have given up youthful follies, permission was soon obtained, but the work was hardly completed when on the festival of the Elevation of the Girdle, Lucrezia Buti and Filippo fled together. Her sister Spinetta, and several other nuns, placed in the convent doubtless to save expense to their families, also fled, but were forced to return.

No one knows for certain which of Filippo's Madonnas was painted from the fair Lucrezia, and one or more pictures, described as her portrait, were certainly executed before he went to Prato. There is a charming half-length picture in the Uffizi, where the Virgin sits on a carved chair, and the child is brought to her by two little angels, one of whom,

Madonna and child with Angels.

Uffizi Gallery Florence. *Fra. Filippo Lippi*

Alinari, Florence

MADONNA AND CHILD

(In the background Meeting of Joachim and Anna, and Nativity of the Virgin)

Pitti Palace

Filippo Lippi

with laughing eyes, looks out of the picture as if asking you to sympathise in his happiness.

There is a round picture by Filippo in the gallery of the Pitti Palace, now the royal residence of the kings of Italy, which is of especial interest as being in all probability the portrait of Lucrezia. It contains three scenes, the meeting of Joachim and Anna (the parents of the Virgin), the Birth of the Virgin, and in the centre of the foreground, Mary and the Infant Christ. The child holds in his hands a pomegranate, which when broken open, so as to show its innumerable seeds, is looked upon as an emblem of man's hope of immortality.

Filippo was painting the dome of the cathedral at Spoleto when he was taken ill, and died suddenly, not without suspicion of poison. In those days, when the knowledge of medicine and disease was far inferior to what it is at present, all sudden and mysterious illnesses were attributed to this cause. In the case of Filippo Lippi it was supposed that the poison was administered by the indignant relations of Lucrezia Buti. This is not very likely, for her parents were dead. Pope Pius II. had absolved them from their vows, and they had lived together as man and wife two years. Filippo Lippi, although a monk, was not a religious painter. He saw and understood all that was beautiful around him, fair women, sweet children, and gay flowers, but his eyes were closed to things of the soul. We must not judge him too severely, for he was forced by circumstances into a life to which he was unsuited. Had he lived later, and

not been dependent on Church patronage, he would have had even greater success. As it was he enjoyed well-deserved popularity in his own time, and when Lorenzo de' Medici desired to bring his body from Spoleto to bury it in the cathedral at Florence, the citizens protested, saying "that they were but ill provided with ornament, especially distinguished men, and that Florence might well spare them one out of their superfluity." To the ordinary observer, attracted by the outward prettiness of Filippo's pictures, his graceful Madonnas and charming peacock-winged angels, this lack of real religious feeling is not apparent. He shares this defect with two far greater artists who immediately succeeded him, Raphael and Andrea del Sarto; they, seeking over much for perfection in colour composition and technique, lost sight of the inward significance which lends a charm to the crude, imperfect efforts of the earlier and less skilful artists.

Vision of S. S. Bernard.

Church of La Badia Florence. *Filippino Lippi*

CHAPTER XIII

FILIPPINO LIPPI

(1460–1505)

Filippo di Filippo Lippi is called Filippino to distinguish him from Fra Filippo Lippi, who may have been his father, or, as some people think, his master. It is probable that he was some relation, for when Filippo the elder died, Filippino was left to the care of his friends Fra Diamente and Sandro Botticelli, the former to manage his worldly affairs, the latter to instruct him in the art of painting.

Fra Diamente is said to have appropriated to his own use the money left in his care; Botticelli, one of the most distinguished artists of his time, faithfully fulfilled his charge.

When Filippino was only twenty-five years of age he was employed by the Carmelites to finish the decorations in the Brancacci Chapel, where Filippo the elder, as a child, had gained his first idea of art. This series of frescoes contain a great variety of subjects, and two painters, Masaccio and Masolino, had already worked at them. Though much has been written and said on the subject, it has not

yet been finally decided how the work is to be divided. These frescoes contain incidents from the history of St. Peter and St. Paul, and among these the liberation of Peter, with the finely-contrasted figures of the sleeping soldier and the angel, is the most striking. In the group of spectators in the "Resurrection of the King's Son," which was left unfinished by Masaccio, Filippino has introduced portraits of many celebrated persons, painters, poets, and historians. Even before he undertook to finish the Brancacci Chapel, Filippo had painted for Piero di Francesco Pugliese the beautiful altar-piece of "The Vision of St. Bernard," which is still in the Badia, the ancient abbey of Florence. The subject is taken from a monastic legend, which relates that the holy St. Bernard, while writing the life of the Virgin on a table hewn out of the rock, was sustained and comforted by a visit from the blessed Mary herself, who appeared surrounded by an angel band. In the background of the picture two monks gaze with rapt amazement at the opening heaven; a third, in earnest converse with a hermit, seems to be telling him the important news; and to use the words of Vasari, "there is besides the portrait of the above-named Francesco, so truly natural that it wants nothing but the power of speech to be alive."

In the beautiful Lombard church of San Michele at Lucca, where you may remember is the tomb of Ilaria, there is a picture by Filippino of St. Helena, St. Jerome, St. Sebastian, and St. Roch, walking in a meadow.

Alinari, Florence

LIBERATION OF ST. PETER

Detail of the Frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel,
Church of the Carmine, Florence

Filippino Lippi

You will at once recognise St. Jerome, for the lion is just visible behind him. St. Sebastian and St. Roch are popular saints, especially invoked in times of plague and sickness. St. Sebastian, who is generally represented naked and pierced with arrows, was an officer in the Pretorian Guards in the time of the Emperor Diocletian. Having refused to worship idols, he, together with his friends Marcus and Marcellina, was condemned to death. Marcus and Marcellina suffered together, but the emperor, who loved Sebastian, endeavoured by all the means in his power to shake his resolution. Sebastian remained unmoved, was exposed to a terrible shower of arrows, and left for dead. Irene, the widow of Marcus, came to bury the body, and finding that he yet breathed, tended his hurts and restored him to life. A second time he came before the emperor, who then ordered him to be beaten to death with clubs, and his body thrown into the Cloaca Maxima, the great sewer of Rome.

The legend of St. Roch is of much more recent date. Although he was the son of rich parents, he forsook his home and travelled from place to place, nursing those who were sick of the most horrible diseases, which were then so common ; and he prayed always that he might be held worthy to die a martyr to the faith. At Piacenza a terrible new disease was raging, and St. Roch, smitten by the malady, crawled out into a wood to die, but his dog fetched each day out of the city a loaf, and an angel came to dress his sores. When he recovered, St. Roch returned to his old home in Languedoc, but he was

so altered by suffering that no one recognised him, and he was thrown into prison as a spy. Here he died, after lingering five years in captivity.

St. Helena, the wife of Constantius Chlorus, Emperor of Byzantium, is said to have been the daughter of King Coilus of Britain. On this account she is numbered among English saints, and many churches are dedicated to her. It was revealed to her in a dream that the true Cross was buried on Mount Calvary. She immediately set out for the Holy Land, and there, buried beneath the soil, were three crosses, that of Christ and of the two thieves crucified with Him. Which was the true one? A sick lady who touched one of them was immediately healed of her disorder. Then Helena knew that she had indeed found that most precious relic, and she divided it into three parts: one she sent to Constantinople, a second to Rome, while the third remained at Jerusalem.

In the squalid town of Prato where Filippo had lived and loved, and Filippino was brought up, the latter painted a wayside shrine, which still hangs on the outside wall of a mean house in a dirty street. Once these shrines were common in Italy, and many were painted by celebrated artists. Most of them have now nearly perished from neglect and exposure, or have been removed bodily into some town hall or picture-gallery. Either fate is bad—the latter the worst; for cleaned, repainted, and placed in new gilt frames the artist, could he come to life again, would often hardly recognise his own work.

Anderson, Florence

ST. ROCH, ST. SEBASTIAN, ST. JEROME, AND ST. HELENA

Cathedral at Lucca

Filippino Lippi

The shrine of Santa Margherita is covered with dirty glass, and if you want to see it, you must get the key from an old woman who, with a circle of friends, will be sitting knitting and gossiping in the street. It has suffered dreadfully from damp, and the colours have faded, but a sweeter Madonna, a more charming child, have rarely been painted. The Child smiles on his worshippers; one of his little hands is raised in blessing, the other rests on the cross and ball which are the emblems of his sovereignty. Behind them the heavens open and a circle of baby angels, with clasped hands, adore the Child Christ. In the right-hand panel are St. Anthony and St. Margaret with a dragon at her feet; on the left St. Stephen and St. Catherine of Alexandria. It must always be remembered that there are two St. Anthonys: St. Anthony of Padua, the disciple of St. Francis, and St. Anthony the abbot, in many ways a more interesting person, and very popular in art. In the third century after Christ, when the great empire of Rome was tottering to its fall, the Christians fought among themselves, and in their turn were persecuted by the heathen emperor. Everything was in confusion. Then St. Paul—not he who wrote the familiar Epistles, but a noble youth of Thebes—fled into the desert, where he lived on the fruit of a date-palm, clothed himself in mats made from the leaves, and spent his life in prayer. His example was followed by many others, including St. Anthony; but while some, like St. Paul, preferred to live in solitary meditation, others joined together, and thus the first monasteries were

founded. At first the hermits were bound by no particular rules; and after the disturbed condition of the towns, where there was no security of life or property, their country retreat, in spite of its hardships, was probably very pleasant.

Such at any rate was the opinion of the mediæval painters. In the Campo Santo at Pisa, and the Uffizi Gallery, are most quaint representations of the Thebaid, the home of the monks of the desert. Here, though some of them are fighting with demons, others are more peacefully employed in digging, carving, fishing, conversing, riding on donkeys, or milking hinds. The temptations which assailed St. Anthony in his retirement were no doubt visions or hallucinations, the results of a mind unhinged by dwelling on particular subjects, and a body weakened by fasting and disease. The mediæval mind required no such explanation, and the temptation of St. Anthony proved an inexhaustible mine of subjects to generations of artists.

The temptations sometimes took the form of a table in the wilderness spread with dainty food and costly wine, another time beautiful women prayed him with soft words and loving looks to come back with them into the world. At other times horrible beasts, lions, tigers, wolves, dragons, or scorpions seemed to surround him on every side, or ugly demons mocked or tormented him.

When Anthony was ninety years of age and had lived seventy-five years in the desert, there came to him a vision, and he heard a voice which said, "Go, seek Paul the hermit; he is holier than thou." He

Alinari, Florence

PART OF THE VIRGIN AND CHILD, WITH ANGELS

Central Panel of the Shrine of St. Margherita, Prato

Filippino Lippi

Alinari, Florence

St. Anthony and St. Margaret—St. Stephen and St. Catherine of Alexandra

Right and Left Wings of the Shrine of St. Margherita, Prato

Filippino Lippi

set forth, therefore, leaning on his crutch, and on the third day found Paul. While they conversed together the raven who daily fed Paul dropped between them a loaf, and behold it was twice the usual size. They broke it, ate together, and Paul said, "My brother, God has sent thee here that thou mightest receive my last breath and bury me. Go fetch a cloak in which to wrap my body."

While St. Anthony, whose feeble limbs were ill-fitted for a journey, was still absent, St. Paul died, and Anthony beheld his spirit, white as a star, carried up to heaven by a host of singing angels. The poor body lay there in the cave, but he was too feeble to bury it, until two lions, forgetting their savage nature and natural enmity to man, approached the hermit and dug with their paws a trench large enough for the wasted body of the saint. St. Paul died at ninety-eight years of age, but St. Anthony survived him fourteen years.

St. Anthony's gentle companion, St. Margaret—

> "St. Margaret that was God's maide,
> Maide Margaret that was so meek and mild,"

was the daughter of a priest at Antioch. The son of the governor desired her in marriage, but she, having been converted to Christianity by her nurse, refused all offers. No tortures could move her, and as if even man's cruelty was not sufficient while in prison, Satan appeared to her under the form of a horrible dragon. Nothing, however, could shake her faith, and at the sight of her constancy so many were

converted that the governor ordered her to be put to death. She was accordingly beheaded in the year of the Lord 307.

St. Catherine of Alexandria, another virgin martyr, was a grand-daughter of the Emperor Constantine. Unlike St. Margaret, whose special charm was her childlike ignorance and simplicity, St. Catherine was among the most learned of her sex. On the death of her father, who had married the heiress of the king of Egypt, she became queen of that country, and her subjects desired that she should marry. This she refused to do, for she had learned in a vision that she should be the bride of Christ. Then Maximin, the Greek emperor, came to Alexandria to persecute the Christians, and he wished, on account of her beauty, to marry Catherine, but she turned from him with indignation, preferring rather to die with her suffering people. "Shall I," said she, "forsake my glorious heavenly spouse to unite myself with thee, who art base-born, wicked, and deformed?" Then Maximin roared like a lion in his wrath, and ordered that she should be torn to pieces between revolving wheels furnished with sharp knives.

But Catherine prayed, and an angel broke the wheels as soon as she was bound to them. After that she was scourged, and at last beheaded. Then angels came and bore her body to a sepulchre on Mount Sinai. Such is the legend of St. Catherine of Alexandria, easily to be distinguished from the nun of Siena by her crown, her royal robes, the martyr palm, and the wheel, the instrument of her torture.

Each called herself the bride of Christ, and they often appear in the same picture.

Curiously enough, the only historical record of a virgin martyr who perished at Alexandria, refers not to a Christian, but to a pagan. Hypatia, the beautiful daughter of Theon, a celebrated mathematician, was, like St. Catherine, learned in all the wisdom of the ancients, and, like her, led a noble and virtuous life. The rabble of monkish fanatics who followed Cyril, the turbulent patriarch of Alexandria, seized upon her while on her way to lecture in the schools, and tore her to pieces on the steps of the high altar, professing, in their ignorance and impiety, that this mean and barbarous action was done for the glory of God.

Filippino was a rapid, and often a careless worker, and his style varies very much at different times, so that you cannot at once recognise his pictures, as is the case with Fra Filippo and Botticelli. He painted many pictures in Rome, and sent others to Bologna, Genoa, and to the king of Hungary. He was very fond of antiquities of all kinds, and introduced into his work Roman armour and classical figures in places to which they were not always suited.

His last works, for he died when only forty-four years of age, are some frescoes in Santa Maria Novella. In one of these St. Philip is casting a devil out of the son of the emperor; in the other, St. John the Evangelist raises from the dead the widow Drusiana. These pictures are full of dramatic feeling, and he has shown by the expression and gestures of the spectators the surprise and terror

that they feel; but what he gains in expression he loses in dignity. A true artist, whether sculptor or painter, will avoid representing any rapid or temporary action. For such an action, as well as too strong an expression of emotion, when fixed in stone or on canvas, soon becomes fatiguing, and ceases to give pleasure to the spectator.

Filippino was loved and regretted by all who knew him, and as his funeral procession passed down the Via dei Servi all the shops were closed, a token of respect shown only to royal persons.

Alinari, Florence

PORTRAIT OF FILIPPINO LIPPI, BY HIMSELF

Uffizi Gallery, Florence

CHAPTER XIV

DOMENICO GHIRLANDAJO

(1449–1494)

Domenico Bigordi, the son of a goldsmith, worked at his father's trade, and received his nickname of Ghirlandajo from the skill with which he made the golden garlands worn by the Florentine maidens.

Mr. Ruskin speaking of him says, "Extricate yourself from the goldsmith's rubbish," and adds sarcastically, "The very best plated goods, Master Ghirlandajo, are always on hand at your shop."

Very few artists admire Ghirlandajo, and many affect to despise him because he never refused any commission, however small, and would paint an altar-piece for a church, or a tradesman's sign, with equal goodwill. This criticism, though not entirely without reason, is too severe. Ghirlandajo had but little imagination; he painted things as he saw them, but his work is never slovenly, and was always done to the best of his ability. The drawing is careful, the colour rich, and every detail, however small, was exactly copied. If you could go into the church of the Ognissanti, and compare the frescoes

of St. Jerome and St. Augustine, painted in competition by Ghirlandajo and Botticelli, you would better understand the qualities and the defects of the former artist, but even in a photograph you can get some idea of the difference between them.

In both pictures there is an old man writing sermons in his study. St. Jerome's table has a handsomely embroidered cover, on it are piled his scissors, ruler, sand-box, and other small articles. On a shelf behind him are his dinner plates and flasks of wine. All these are so well painted that they look quite real; the room is like the cabin of a ship; it is interesting to count how many things are tidily stowed away in so small a space. Your attention is thus drawn to the contents of the study before you look at the owner. When you do, you will see a commonplace old man, with a bald wrinkled forehead, and full beard. He looks bored, as if ideas were not coming too readily, and he would be glad of some distraction.

Now turn to St. Augustine. There is nothing in the simple furniture of the room to distract your mind from the central object, the saint himself. Notice his refined and intellectual countenance; indifferent to all earthly sights and sounds he gazes upwards, his whole being absorbed in spiritual ecstasy, and the contrast between the hands of the two men is quite as remarkable as that between their faces and surroundings.

Let us next visit the church of Santa Trinità, where we shall find more of Ghirlandajo's frescoes. In this church, carefully hidden away from the

Alinari, Florence

ST. AUGUSTINE

Companion Fresco to St. Jerome, Church of the Ognissanti, Florence

Sandro Botticelli

Alinari, Florence

ST. JEROME IN HIS STUDY

Fresco in the Church of the Ognissanti, Florence

Domenico Ghirlandajo

public gaze, is an ancient crucifix, important in the history of early Italian art, on account of the time at which it was painted, and still more interesting from the legend which is attached to it. It came originally from a wayside shrine, and was preserved in the beautiful church of San Miniato on the hillside above Florence, before it came into the keeping of its present owners. The legend is as follows :—

A certain knight, Giovanni Gualberto, had determined to revenge his brother's murder. On the evening of Good Friday he followed the assassin into a lonely place and was about to exact vengeance. The assassin, falling on his knees, pleaded for forgiveness in the name of Him whose death on the Cross was that day commemorated, and Gualberto stayed his hand. As he returned somewhat sadly to his home, he knelt before this crucifix, and behold the figure of Christ bowed down towards him, showing by this gesture that he who forgives his enemy is worthy of the love of the Saviour, who when hanging on the cross prayed for forgiveness to His murderers.

The paintings by Ghirlandajo adorn a chapel which belonged to the Sassetta family, and the subject of the frescoes is taken from the legendary history of St. Francis. In the one of which an illustration is given the scene lies in Florence, just outside the church itself. In the background is the bridge of Santa Trinita, to the right the Spini palace. Out of the church come the monks, and on either side of a coffin are the brethren of the Misericordia, whose office it is to bear the dead

to their last resting-place. A little child, who lately lived in the palace, is now being carried to his grave. St. Francis, appearing in the air, restores life to the waxen form, and the child sits up on the bier to the delight of his sorrowing mother.

The defect in this picture is the indifferent attitude of the bystanders. The portly citizens and charming ladies are not the least interested, but talk among themselves, or look in another direction, as if nothing unusual were taking place. The artist was not in sympathy with his subject; he only wanted a good piece of decoration.

In the altar-piece, which once belonged to this chapel, is an Adoration of the Shepherds, now in the picture-gallery of the Belle Arti. Here you may see Ghirlandajo at his best. What a wealth of detail, how much loving care the painter has bestowed on the smallest object. The green grass is enamelled with flowers, and a tiny goldfinch sits on a marble stone. The thatched roof of the stable is supported on square fluted columns, with Corinthian capitals, and the manger is a beautifully sculptured marble coffin. The stolid gaze of the ox is well contrasted with the alert air of the ass, whose forward ears show his intelligent interest in what is going forward. The graceful Virgin kneels before her infant son, who kicks his dimpled legs, and sucks his thumb in true baby fashion. Joseph shades his eyes with his hand as he watches the upward flight of the angel, who had brought the good news to the shepherds. Some of the shepherds still tend their sheep on the green upland, but three of their number have come

Alinari, Florence

MIRACLE BY ST. FRANCIS

Fresco in the Sassetta Chapel, Church of the Santa Trinita, Florence

Domenico Ghirlandajo

Alinari, Florence

ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

Accademia di Belle Arti, Florence

Domenico Ghirlandajo

to do homage to the infant Christ, bearing with them as an offering a white lamb. Round the hillside, under a Roman archway, pours the procession of the three kings; slaves run to keep pace with the horses as their riders hasten to find the long foretold Messiah, whose star, first seen in the east, has guided them to Bethlehem. In the background is a town with many towers, and a river broadening out into the open sea.

Another very similar picture painted for the Children's Hospital still occupies its original position. In this also there is an angel winging his flight heavenward above the sheepfolds, and on the hillside is a fortified town, but it is the Magi, not the shepherds, who kneel in adoration, and St. John the Baptist, the patron of Florence, occupies a prominent position; and in front, in allusion to the special destination of the picture, are two tiny children, the first infant martyrs, with golden haloes and bleeding wounds. In the background the Massacre of the Innocents is seen to be taking place. On the roof of the stable four angels unite in song, and through the cracks in the marble steps sweet flowers force their way to the sunlight, but the special charm in this picture lies in the landscape. In the far distance high mountains raise their heads against the sky, the broad river is covered with ships, and behind the nearest headland is a harbour, surrounded by wharfs and storehouses, where one tall spire is dimly visible.

St. John appears constantly in Florentine pictures. You may remember seeing him among the angels

in the "Coronation of the Virgin" by Filippo Lippi. When a saint thus occupies an important place in a scene or story with which he has no real connection, you may be sure that he or she (as the case may be) was held in especial honour in the town for which the picture was painted. It is useful, therefore, to know something about the principal saints and their attributes. St. Jerome, as you know, often has a lion, and, in Venetian pictures, a partridge; St. Barbara carries her tower. If they were martyrs, it is their instruments of torture that they carry or that are placed near them; thus St. Lawrence has a gridiron, St. Catherine a spiked wheel. Some saints, like St. George, are honoured throughout Christendom; others, like St. Petronius, or St. Fina, only in their native place. The most popular saints in Venice are not the same as those in Florence and Siena, though St. John the Baptist, as the near relation and early playmate of Christ, is very generally worshipped.

In speaking about Giotto's fresco of the Nativity in the cloister of Santa Maria Novella, I referred to another example of the same subject in the choir, painted by Ghirlandajo, and told you what a very unfavourable opinion Mr. Ruskin had of it. There is a very large series of these frescoes, those on the right hand telling the story of the life of the Virgin, those on the left of St. John the Baptist, and they are exceedingly interesting. It is like having a large historical picture-book spread out before you. It is true that they do not show much religious feeling; their charm lies in the picture they present of

Alinari, Florence

NATIVITY OF THE VIRGIN

Fresco in the Church of Santa Maria Novella, Florence

Domenico Ghirlandajo

Florentine life in the fifteenth century, and the portraits they contain of the beautiful ladies who adorned the court of Lorenzo the Magnificent. Here, again, we might make an interesting comparison between two representations of the same subject separated in time by a lapse of more than a hundred years.

In Ghirlandajo's fresco the scene is a panelled room, with a lovely della Robbia relief of Cupids at play. In the centre are two pretty smiling women, one of whom holds the Child, who, almost naked, lies contentedly on her arm, and the nurse, with rather a dramatic action, pours water into a handsome copper bowl. Ginevra di Benci, the most beautiful woman of her time, is coming in with four friends, dressed in festal array, to congratulate St. Anna, and join in baby worship. On the staircase is a secondary scene, the meeting of the Virgin and St. Elizabeth.

Though professing to be an incident of legendary history, this picture really shows what happened in Florence when a child was born into one of the noble families—Tornabuoni, Albizzi, or the still more famous house of Medici.

Most of Ghirlandajo's best work is in Florence, but when still very young he was employed to paint a side chapel in the cathedral at S. Gimignano, which contained the bones of Santa Fina. As we have already in imagination visited this town, we can now go direct to the cathedral.

Santa Fina was a maiden of S. Gimignano, who having at a very tender age received the gift of

an apple from a small boy of her acquaintance, was awakened to a sense of sin. Therefore she desired that some foul disease should fall upon her, so that no man should desire her in marriage. For seven years she lay on a board till her flesh rotted on it, and the rats made their habitations therein. She died in the odour of sanctity at the age of fifteen. Even after death the touch of her sacred body healed disease, and the paralysed nurse, who stooped to kiss her foot, recovered the power of her useless arm.

Such, at least, is the story. We must remember in all accounts of miracles how much allowance must be made for the imagination, especially of people under the influence of strong emotion. The age of miracles is not past; even now marvellous cures are sometimes effected at places like Lourdes, in France, where a few years ago the Virgin Mary was said to have appeared to a shepherd girl. Moreover, you have only to read about the Christian Scientists and Faith Healers to understand how easy it is to make people believe what they wish to be true. If this is so now, when nearly every one has some education and so many wonderful things have been discovered by science, much more so was it then among ignorant and superstitious people.

The legend of Santa Fina is an unpleasant one, the story of the hysterical girl conveys no useful teaching, and probably was invented by the monks to bring money to their church. Very different is the example of St. Catherine of Siena, who also became religious at a very early age, and, though

Alinari, Florence

HEADS OF CHORISTERS

Details from a Fresco in the Chapel of Santa Fina, Church of the Collegiata, St. Gimignano

Domenico Ghirlandaio

Alinari, Florence

APPARITION OF ST. GREGORY

Fresco in the Chapel of Santa Fina, Church of the Collegiata, St. Gimignano

Domenico Ghirlandaio

suffering much from fasting and penance, went about doing good and helping everybody. This is the real Christian life, to walk in the footsteps of Christ who has set us an example.

The tomb of Santa Fina was designed by Benedetto da Majano, a pupil of Donatello, and to the right and left on either side of the chapel are Ghirlandajo's frescoes. In one Santa Fina, when lying on her deathbed, is comforted by a vision of St. Gregory. The whole scene is so simply represented, and in so antiquated a style, it seems impossible that it should be the work of the same hand that painted the elaborate frescoes in Santa Maria Novella. For this very reason it is admired by modern artists, who, while they agree with Mr. Ruskin in condemning much of Ghirlandajo's work, declare that the Vision of Santa Fina is almost worthy of Giotto.

St. Gregory has a special interest for all children of the Anglo-Saxon race on either side of the great ocean. For it was he, pitying the fair-haired boys and maidens exposed for sale in the market at Rome, sent to England the first missionaries.

St. Gregory was kind and loving to all, and is the last pope of Rome who has been canonised as a saint. Many legends are related about him; this is the most interesting one.

Trajan, who was emperor of Rome at the time of the birth of Christ, although a heathen, was a just and good man. One day, while riding forth to battle, a poor widow cried to him for justice. He replied that on his return he would consider her request. She answered that he might fall in battle,

and then who would have pity on her? The emperor thereupon listened to her woes and granted her petition. St. Gregory, musing over this story, wept to think that so good a man was shut out from the joys of heaven, and he prayed that the soul of the heathen emperor might yet find salvation. A voice came in answer to his prayer, "The soul of Trajan has been granted to your prayers, but to you is given the choice of two evils—two days in purgatory, or sickness and bodily affliction for the rest of your days." Gregory chose the latter, and all his life bore his sufferings with infinite patience.

Domenico Ghirlandajo died suddenly when only forty-four years of age. He had two brothers, David and Benedetto, and a son Ridolfo, also artists, but not one of the three was at all equal to him in skill.

The Madonna writing the Magnificat.

Uffizi Gallery Florence. *Sandro Botticelli*

CHAPTER XV

SANDRO BOTTICELLI

(1446–1510)

Alessandro Marino di Filipepi was the son of Marino Filipepi di Vanni, a tanner. His father, after giving him the best education then attainable, in despair, it is said, at the boy's aversion to learning, apprenticed him to a goldsmith. The nickname of Botticelli, by which he is generally known, is said to have been given to him to distinguish him from his brother Antonio, who was called Botticetto (little cask). All through the life of the artist the influence of his early training is apparent in his skilful use of gold, and in his love for elaborate designs and fantastic ornament. When still very young he seems to have forsaken the workshop of the goldsmith for the studio of Fra Filippo, and his first Madonna pictures can with difficulty be distinguished from those of his master.

In the picture-gallery of the Palace of the Louvre in Paris is one of the most beautiful of the Madonnas painted in Botticelli's earlier style, and it is certain that no prentice hand had part in its execution. The conception of the picture is exquisitely tender and

refined, the colouring harmonious, and every detail dwelt on with loving care. Behind the happy family group the roses bloom, the golden sunlight falls softly on the boy, who, clad only in a little shirt, climbs upon his mother's knee to clasp his tiny arms round her neck, while the young St. John seems to ask your sympathy with the pretty scene. Another very sweet picture of the same kind is the Madonna of the Corn Ears. This once belonged to Prince Chigi, but was recently sold for a large sum to a wealthy American. When this transaction was discovered by the Italian Government, Prince Chigi was imprisoned and made to pay a heavy fine, as it is against the law that any well-known picture should leave the country; but the Madonna of the Corn Ears will never return to its former owner.

Botticelli, like Filippo Lippi, painted many round pictures. Among the finest is the well-known *tondo* in the Uffizi, where the Madonna, crowned by angels, is writing the Magnificat. In colour and composition it is among the finest of his works, and from the arrangement of the design into a series of three circles has a fanciful resemblance to an opening rose. The dark-eyed children, who stand round the Madonna, are said to be likenesses of Lorenzo de' Medici and his brothers.

As a portrait painter Botticelli excelled Ghirlandajo, and his brush was constantly thus employed in the service of his patrons. At Frankfort is a lady wearing an engraved gem known to belong to the famous Medici collection; at Berlin are likenesses

Alinari, Florence

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST

Detail from the Adoration of the Magi, Uffizi Gallery, Florence

Sandro Botticelli

of Lucrezia Tornabuoni, and of her son Giuliano de' Medici, who with his long nose, heavy-lidded eyes, and thin supercilious mouth, stands out as if alive from the canvas. Piero, son of Lorenzo, in his portrait at Florence, holds up the medallion portrait of his famous great-grandfather. When Giuliano was murdered, Botticelli was employed to paint on the walls of the Palazzo Vecchio the portraits of the members of the Pazzi conspiracy, who, as a mark of contempt and abhorrence, were represented head downwards. Like most of his contemporaries, Botticelli revelled in the gorgeous costume and wealth of gold ornament always introduced into the Adoration of the Three Kings. Five times at least he painted this subject, and in the finest example now in the Uffizi are Cosimo the younger, Lorenzo, and Giuliano, with other members of the Medici family, and in one corner of the picture is the artist himself.

Judging from the style of some of his pictures, for there is no other evidence, it is generally believed that Botticelli was at one time employed in the workshop of Andrea del Verocchio, a sculptor and painter of no mean attainments. The "Tobias with three Angels" in the Accademia, hitherto supposed to be by Botticelli, has of late been ascribed either to Verocchio or some other painter of the Botticellian circle. Whoever may have been the artist it is a charming picture, and its dainty tripping angels with their wind-blown draperies have a strong resemblance to an undoubted work of Botticelli, the "Judith" in the Uffizi. The stories of

Judith and of Tobias, so popular with Florentine artists, are both taken from the apocryphal books of the Bible. Tobias was the son of a pious man, who relates his own good deeds at great length in the early part of the story. While still almost a child he was sent, like a prince in a fairy tale, to look for a wife, and also with the more prosaic object of collecting a debt due to his father. When Tobias had reached the house of the relation which was the goal of his journey, he was betrothed to Sara, the daughter of his host. Sara, however, was under the spell of an evil demon who had killed in succession seven youths who had aspired to her hand. Tobias, warned by the angel, brought with him a box containing the gall of a fish. This he burned, and the demon, annoyed by the smell, fled never to return. Raphael, the guardian angel of all good children, is the special companion and guide of young Tobias, but sometimes, as in this picture, the archangels Michael and Gabriel also accompany him.

The story of Judith relates to a time when Israel was hard pressed by the armies of Assyria. A noble lady, named Judith, dedicated her life and honour to the service of her country. She went over to the tent of Holofernes, the leader of the Assyrian host, beguiled him with her caresses, and then cut off his head as he lay asleep. Most artists represent Judith triumphant at the death of her enemy. Botticelli alone had enough imagination to understand what she must have suffered that awful night. In his picture, though she carries in

Alinari, Florence

SPRING

Accademia di Belle Arti, Florence

Sandro Botticelli

one hand the olive branch of peace, and in the other the sword with which she had done the bloody deed, her hanging head and lagging footsteps show her unwillingness to meet the warriors of her tribe, who are pouring forth to welcome her. The face of the slave, on the contrary, is full of savage joy, and she hurries forward, eager to show the ghastly trophy.

In the introductory chapter Botticelli is described as the most representative artist of the Renaissance. This appears not so much in his Madonnas and in his portraits, for in these many of his contemporaries also excelled, but in the allegorical and mythological subjects he so often painted. Among the largest and best-known works of this kind are "Spring" and "The Birth of Venus," painted for Cosimo de' Medici's villa at Castello. In the first, Venus, queen of love and symbol of the revival of nature in spring, advances from among the orange trees; above her head floats Cupid, who aims his flaming arrows at the three fair sisters, the Graces, called by Homer, Euphrosyne, Aglaia, and Thalia, who with fingers closely interlaced, dance hand in hand with ungirt transparent drapery. Hermes, an idealised likeness of Giuliano de' Medici, dispels with his magic wand the unwholesome mists which still linger among the thick foliage of the orange groves. To the right a strong-winged figure, rushing through the trees, seizes in his arms the maiden Flora, who, according to an oft-repeated saying, became, by the touch of Zephyr, the flower-bearer. Simonetta, the lady loved by Giuliano, in the guise of the

Spring goddess, comes tripping over the verdant meadow, strewing before her the roses she carries in her uplifted drapery. Everywhere there are flowers, tall lilies, modest violets, honeysuckle, and the white guelder rose ; the narcissus raises from the grass its scented clusters, the wild strawberries bloom and ripen between them.

This picture was painted in honour of the intended marriage of Giuliano de' Medici and the fair Simonetta Cattanei, but she was stricken down with a fever and died in the flower of her youth. Every one mourned for her, and Lorenzo de' Medici, describing the day when she was carried to her grave with her face uncovered, says: "All Florence was touched to tears by the sight, and the poets poured forth elegies. The month was April, and the young earth seemed to have put on her robe of blossoms only to make the pathos of that death more poignant."

The story of the birth of Venus is told by the Greek poet Hesiod. He describes how Aphrodite (Venus), born of the sea-foam, was wafted by favouring winds to the shores of Cyprus. With a curious mixture of classic and mediæval fancy, Botticelli represents the goddess as received on her landing by a Florentine maiden, who holds extended towards her a rose-pink mantle strewn with tiny daisies. The maiden's white dress is sprinkled with blue cornflowers, and round her neck and waist are trailing roses. Behind the figure of the goddess, headland upon headland stretch out into the blue sea.

Brogi, Florence

AN ANGEL: DETAIL FROM THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN

Accademia di Belle Arti, Florence

Sandro Botticelli

Alinari, Florence

PALLAS AND THE CENTAUR

Pitti Palace, Florence

Sandro Botticelli

The picture of "Pallas and the Centaur," which now hangs in the royal apartments of the Pitti Palace, is not only a very fine one but of great historical interest, for it was probably painted on the return of Lorenzo de' Medici from an important diplomatic mission. It represents the triumph of Pallas (wisdom) over the Centaur, who is the symbol of brute force. Lorenzo de' Medici, hard pressed by many enemies, had thrown himself on the mercy of his bitterest opponent, Alphonso, king of Naples, and by his persuasive eloquence and agreeable manners converted him into a friend, by which means a bloody war was happily averted.

All these pictures are peculiarly representative of a time when the artists were no longer dependent upon Church patronage, and therefore a large number of new subjects appear upon their canvas. In the creation of them Botticelli stands unrivalled; his pictures are poems, his figures tread the earth with a rhythmic motion, as if moving to the sound of music. His vivid imagination fills his compositions with a wealth of minute details, fragile rose-petals, gardens where oranges gleam amid dark foliage, graceful marble arabesques on the throne of the Madonna, dainty embroidery on her mantle, and jewelled binding on her book of hours, all these are dwelt on with loving care.

The story may be merely suggested, but every part of the composition, however trifling, is painted with the most loving care. No artist had a stronger sense of the decorative quality of his pictures. Though his models are often ugly, and sometimes

placed in positions so constrained and unnatural as to be grotesque, though his knowledge of anatomy was deficient, yet his sense of beauty in line was never wanting, each separate part falling into the pattern when looked at as a whole.

On one of the great staircases at the Louvre are two frescoes discovered behind the white-washed walls in what is now the scullery of the Villa Lemmi, near Florence. These, although much damaged, were carefully removed, and in their present position, with no brighter pictures near to kill their faint colour, have a very good effect. They were painted to celebrate a marriage between Lorenzo Tornabuoni and Giovanni degli Albizzi, and in one is the bridegroom, surrounded by the Seven Liberal Arts, in the other the bride being adorned for her marriage by Venus and the Graces.

In the Uffizi Gallery there is a small but very highly-finished picture, which it is said was given by the artist to a Florentine gentleman who had stood his friend at a time when some false accusations had been made against him. The subject is appropriate to the occasion, though the idea was not an original one, being taken from a written account of a famous picture painted by the Greek artist Apelles. There is a man with long ears seated on a judgment-seat, on either side of him are two women, Falsehood and Pride. Calumny, a woman of splendid aspect, draws towards him a young man, whose hair she holds with one hand, having in the other a torch. Following her are

two female attendants, Craft and Deceit, and with them is Envy, a pale, haggard man, dirty and toil-worn. Repentance is there in mourning weeds, while Truth, who needs no covering, raises her hand appealingly to heaven. The background of this picture is of elaborate classical architecture, and gold is used freely in every part.

When Botticelli was about forty-three years of age he came under the influence of Savonarola, who, as you have already heard, preached in Florence a crusade against luxury and vice, upbraiding the people for their sins, and warning them of the judgment to come. So great was his influence that writers brought their books, artists their paintings, women their fine clothes and jewellery, and cast them into the flames. It is known that another artist, Fra Bartolommeo, then destroyed many of his most important pictures, and it is probable that Botticelli did the same, especially such as might be considered profane. After this time he painted only religious pictures; and it is supposed that, though he kept house with some of his relations, his last years were passed in poverty and ill-health.

Once more, however, the expiring flame of his genius burnt up brightly, for his picture of the Nativity in the National Gallery has the bright colouring, and the same quaint, fanciful detail, which characterised his early pictures. On the upper part of the canvas, in indifferent Greek, is the following inscription:—

"This picture I, Alexander, painted at the end

of the year 1500, in the troubles of Italy, in the half time after the time during the fulfilment of the eleventh of St. John, in the second woe of the Apocalypse, in the loosing of the devil for three years and a half. Afterwards he shall be chained, and we shall see him trodden down as in this picture."

But the clouds had lifted, and the painter looked forward with faith to a happier time. For here there is no trace of melancholy; joy everlasting is the keynote of the composition. Rich and poor, wise men and shepherds, the animals which share the toil of man, are all included in the universal thanksgiving. Overhead the singing angels, circling through the blue heaven, cast down their golden crowns, and on the thatched roof of the stable an angelic choir unite in song. Below, three weary pilgrims, Savonarola, Domenico, and Silvestro, crowned with flowers and bearing palms of victory, are welcomed to their rest by celestial beings, while Sin and Evil, symbolised by horned demons, slink away into cracks and crannies of the earth.

In everything except his work Botticelli is merely a name, and yet we feel that had we known him we should have loved him. He was no monk to live untouched by human joys and ills: he lived, rejoiced, and suffered with his fellow-men. We cannot learn that he had either wife or child, or any home save the court of the Medici, and here we must imagine him mingling with the giddy throng, or standing aside, wrapped in his scarlet mantle, observing all that passed around him. It

Calumny.

Uffizi Gallery, Florence. *Sandro Botticelli.*

is said that he, too, loved Simonetta, but the humble artist was eclipsed by the gay and gallant Giuliano, the idol of the people. There are so many pictures painted by him and his pupils, that he could have had little leisure for idleness; but all his works have a tinge of melancholy, which deepened into settled gloom during the last years of his life. The faces of his Madonna and Venus alike are full of wistful sadness, as if seeking after the unknown. Strange it is, therefore, and comforting to those whose hearts yearn over the lonely artist, to know that his last picture, the only one ever signed and dated, is thus so expressive of faith in a happier life and a better world. Peace, love, joy everlasting, is the last message of the most sympathetic of painters.

The Italian painters and poets of the fifteenth century had a passion for flowers, and any one who has seen Florence in the spring will fully sympathise with their joy in reviving nature. Then the woods of Vallombrosa are heavy with the scent of purple and white orchis; the blue iris, the Florentine lily, bedeck the meadows. All round Settignano and Fiesole, on the edge of the vineyards, and at the foot of the dark rows of cypress trees, the ground is white with anemones. Narcissus, daffodils, forget-me-nots, daisies, violets, and primroses, blossoms innumerable, raise their sweet heads above the verdant grass. Later on there are the lilies and roses. Tall lilies fill the pictures of Fra Filippo and Botticelli, angels scatter roses in those of Filippino. Botticelli above all loved roses, and has introduced

them everywhere; rose-hedges and lattices, falling roses, rose-garlands round the necks and waists of his maidens, roses in the hair and laps of his angels. The verses of Poliziano ring with descriptions of flowers and spring, and the following lines, which form part of a ballad composed by Lorenzo de' Medici, are inspired by the same youthful, joyous spirit which characterises the work of the English poets of the Elizabethan Age.

"I went a-roaming, maidens, one bright day
In a green garden, in mid month of May.
Violets and lilies grew on every side
'Mid the green grass and young flowers wonderful
Golden and white and red and azure eyed;
Towards which I stretched my hands, eager to pull
Plenty, to make my fair curls beautiful,
To crown my rippling curls with garlands gay.

For when the full rose quits her tender sheath
When she is sweetest, and most fair to see,
Then is the time to place her in thy wreath,
Before her beauty and her freshness flee.
Gather ye therefore roses, with great glee,
Sweet girls, or ere their perfume flee away."

CHAPTER XVI

OUR HOME TREASURES

All through this volume we have in imagination been wandering among the cities of Tuscany and Umbria, but this last chapter is intended as an introduction to some of the English art treasures most accessible to the general public—namely, the casts of the Mediæval sculptures in the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington, and the early Italian pictures in the National Gallery at Trafalgar Square. Surely some readers of this volume will visit these admirable institutions, and on each succeeding visit they will find that there is still something fresh to interest them.

The books read in youth, and the objects first seen when interest is keen and memory retentive, are never forgotten. Every one, therefore, should spare a little time for those beautiful things, the work of busy brains and skilful fingers that long, long ago crumbled into dust. Whether rich or poor, they belong to you, for they are your inheritance from the past.

Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington

To see the sculptures we must go to South Kensington; where there are some interesting

original pieces of sculpture and a great many casts taken from the most famous works of the Renaissance. These do not equal in beauty the originals, but your enjoyment of the latter will hereafter be the greater. At the present time the rooms devoted to these casts are dreadfully crowded, but as building is now going on, they will soon be much better arranged. In the meanwhile Ghiberti's Golden Gates are hidden away behind the colossal David of Michael Angelo, and framed by the portal of St. Petronius from Bologna, with its beautiful reliefs of the Creation, and Adam and Eve driven out of Eden. Near by lies Ilaria del Caretto from Lucca, with her dog at her feet. The two pulpits from the Baptistery and the Cathedral of Pisa stand on either side, so that it is possible to compare the work of Niccolo Pisano and his son. In the former, with its beautiful classical Madonna, the six sides are reared on slender columns; while in Giovanni's pulpit, on the other hand, several of the columns are replaced by human figures, who with painful effort support on their bent necks its whole weight. Below these cluster groups of allegorical personages, all ugly and grotesque. Could there be a more painful or more inadequate personification of a queenly city than the emaciated woman with the two half-starved mannikins tearing at her breast, which represents Pisa in the days of her prosperity? Close by is a cast of the tomb of St. Zenobius at Florence with its exquisite reliefs of flying angels, who hold up a medallion with the saint's name. Donatello's St. George also is there,

and his David, and in an adjoining room St. Cecilia and many other beautiful reliefs by this celebrated sculptor and his followers. There is, moreover, an interesting Pietà, which is a genuine work. The cast taken from the back of Orcagna's shrine, with the Death and Assumption of the Virgin, will enable you to see how this artist united in himself the characteristics of both the Sienese and Florentine schools. His angels have their hair rolled back under pointed diadems like those of Duccio, while the bearded men who bend, crushed with grief, at the head and foot of the dying woman, are taken direct from Giotto.

The finest example of the work of Luca della Robbia and his school is a great flower-wreathed medallion containing the arms of Rénè of Anjou, father of Margaret, the unfortunate queen of Henry VI. of England ; but there are many other specimens of varying quality.

Luca's and Donatello's singing galleries are high above your head, so that you see them far better here than in the Opera del Duomo at Florence, and can understand what Donatello meant by his apparently clumsy figures, so much more effective at this height than the daintily finished groups by Luca. These are a few only among many interesting and important sculptures.

National Gallery

The National Gallery contains beautiful original pictures of every period. Before entering by the

central door you will see on the left a row of portraits from the Greek coffins found at Hawara, and on the right an extraordinary altar-piece by Margheritone d'Arezzo, an artist who painted in the debased Italian style, which immediately preceded Giotto. The colours are crude and glaring, and it seems impossible that any grown-up person could have seriously executed anything so outrageously bad and so ridiculous as the scenes from the Lives of Saints, especially the one in which the dragon after having swallowed St. Margaret is spitting her out again. It is the very childhood of art, or rather the childishness of decrepit old age.

There are a good many pictures by Giotto's pupils, none, unfortunately, by himself, though some heads of Apostles were formerly ascribed to him. These were cut from the wall of the Church of the Carmine at Florence when the building was injured by fire, but it is now known that the fresco from which they were taken was not painted till fifteen years after the master's decease.

Orcagna is well represented by a large altar-piece and a number of separate panels which once formed its predella, and also by an Annunciation with an exceedingly ugly angel. Fra Angelico's predella of Christ, with the banner of the Resurrection, offers a good example both of his merits and his defects. The carefully balanced composition, with its Patriarch and Martyrs on the one side, the Virgin Mary with evangelists and saints on the other, and its corner panels occupied by monks and nuns,

appears at first sight mechanical and uninteresting. The figure of Christ, too, is weak and devoid of structural form, but on looking carefully into the picture it becomes apparent that no two figures are alike, that the holy brothers and sisters whose names are inscribed are portraits, that every part so carefully thought out has a beauty of its own, and has been painted with the most minute attention to detail.

Benozzo Gozzoli, Fra Angelico's pupil, contributes a fine altar-piece of the Madonna and Child with saints and angels. In the foreground kneel St. Jerome and St. Francis, while on the marble steps, like living jewels, are two tiny goldfinches. The goldfinch, whose wings are streaked crimson, as if with blood, is a symbol of sacrifice. Benozzo's other picture, the Rape of Helen, is especially interesting, for it probably formed part of a *cassone* or wedding chest, in the decoration of which the Florentine artists were justly celebrated. Every one knows the story of Helen of Troy, for whose sake so many brave men died and homes were made desolate. Who can forget the wail of anguish in the chorus of the Agamemnon written by Æschylus, the first of the great Greek dramatists—a wail echoed now in many sad hearts throughout Great Britain and her Colonies? "Alas! alas! for the numberless fair men who died before Troy town. Ares, the war god, the grim gold exchanger who barters the bodies of men, sends home a little dust shut up within a narrow urn, and wife and father water this with tears and cry: Behold, he perished

be seized and tortured; this was done, and the saintly youth, stretched out on an iron frame above a hot coal fire, was slowly roasted to death. He died praising God that he had been allowed to die for the faith. Hippolytus, his former gaoler, who with his family had been converted and baptized, found the body and buried it; for doing this he was tied to the tail of a wild horse and perished miserably.

St. Cosmo and St. Damian were natives of Arabia, a country famed for the wisdom and learning of its inhabitants. At a time when all Europe was plunged in barbarism, Arabian philosophers studied the stars, practised occult sciences and medicine, and committed to writing valuable information which would otherwise have been forgotten.

These two youths were the sons of Theodora, a pious widow; they excelled in the learning of the time, and having the means of livelihood, sought not riches, but went about healing the sick and the poor, asking nothing for their services. In the persecution of Diocletian, already frequently referred to, when so many Christians sealed their faith with their lives, Cosmo and Damian were brought before the Roman governors of Arabia, and condemned to death. Fire would not burn them, the sea refused to drown, the stones flung at them fell off leaving them unharmed, but killing many of their persecutors.

"God's elements are merciful,
Man only mocks His will;
The raging fire had spared the saints,
The sword had power to kill."

Cosmo and Damian were beheaded on September 27, A.D. 301. They occur very frequently in Florentine pictures during the supremacy of the Medici family, and can easily be recognised, for they wear long red furred gowns and large caps, and each carries a small box of ointment. Even after their death miracles were performed by them. A poor man with a diseased leg fell asleep in the church dedicated to the saintly physicians, and as he slept, they appeared before him and consulted what should be done. Then one of them with a sharp knife removed the unsound limb, and placed on the stump a leg cut from a negro who had recently been buried in a neighbouring church. The other saint with his miraculous ointment united the two together, and the man rose up whole, having one black leg attached to his white body.

A good deal of doubt exists about the pictures bearing the name of Filippo Lippi. Two amongst them, a large *tondo* of the Adoration of the Magi, with portraits of the Medici family, and a long, narrow picture of the same subject are now given to his master, Sandro Botticelli. A third example of the same subject, very different both in style and colour, remains his without dispute. There is a lovely adoring angel cut out from a fresco, a St. Francis in glory, and a large picture which once belonged to the Rucellai family. In this last picture, the Virgin and Child, with St. Jerome and St. Dominic, form a central group. Behind, in one

comfort the faithful mourners. Tier upon tier, blazing in gold and colour, shine the hierarchies of heaven. In the lowest ranks are Angels, Princedoms, Archangels, and above these Dominions, Virtues, and Powers. All these myriad beings are in a perfect ecstasy of emotion and movement as they turn one to another, singing, talking, and playing on quaint musical instruments. In fancy you can hear the vibration of the strings, the rustle of wings, and the flutter of flying drapery. Nearest to the Seat of the Almighty are Thrones, and those mysterious creations of oriental imagination, Cherubim and Seraphim. These, who exist only to praise, need no bodies, but are heads and wings only. They, too, having no part with or sympathy in earthly affairs, remain unmoved amid the general rejoicing. The climax of the great drama thus laid bare to mortal eyes is the Virgin's reception in heaven by her Divine Son.

This remarkable picture has, moreover, a history, and a history or a pedigree adds much to the interest of even inferior works of art. It was painted for Mattei Palmieri, a Florentine citizen, the author of a poem called the City of Life. This poem was regarded as heretical, as it set forth the opinion of Origen, an early Father of the Church, who asserted that men were the descendants of those angels who, when there was war in heaven, held aloof, being neither for God nor the Devil. For both in religion or politics it is always, though unjustly, considered despicable not to take sides.

This picture, it was said, was illustrative of this heretical doctrine, and it was therefore hidden from sight until bought by the Duke of Hamilton and brought to England.

By Botticini also, or that mysterious painter known in artistic circles as Amico di Sandro (the friend of Sandro probably, his pupil or his imitator), is the Tobias and the Angel, which will particularly interest you if you remember the account of Tobias with the three angels at Florence. This also is a charming picture, even if looked at only for the clothes, for no one can fail to admire the white gold-embroidered under-robe of the angel, the soft dark blue and dull pink in his mantle. The boy's dress, with crimson sleeves and fur edging, is beautifully painted, and the landscape, though still conventional, has a quaint charm of its own. The other pictures bearing this artist's name, Venus with the children playing among roses, the sweet Madonna which once belonged to the architect St. Gallo, a friend of Botticelli, and two other Madonna pictures, are probably all school pieces; they imitate successfully his very marked style, but they exaggerate his defects.

It is evident, therefore, even from this short list of pictures, that something may be learned about Italian painting even without crossing the silver streak which divides Great Britain from the Continent, and every year the American galleries become richer by the addition of fine pictures, once the property of private persons in Europe; while,

besides the National Gallery in London, and public galleries in other great towns, there are beautiful collections belonging to his Majesty and many private persons, which, by the courtesy of their owners, are accessible to the public at fixed times.

THE END

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